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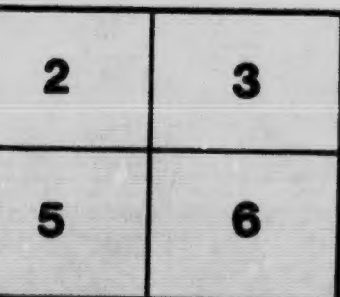
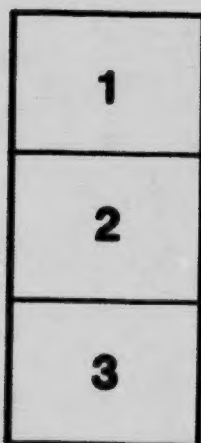
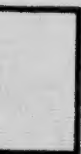
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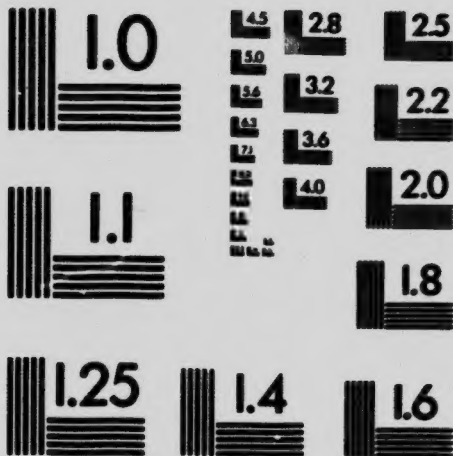
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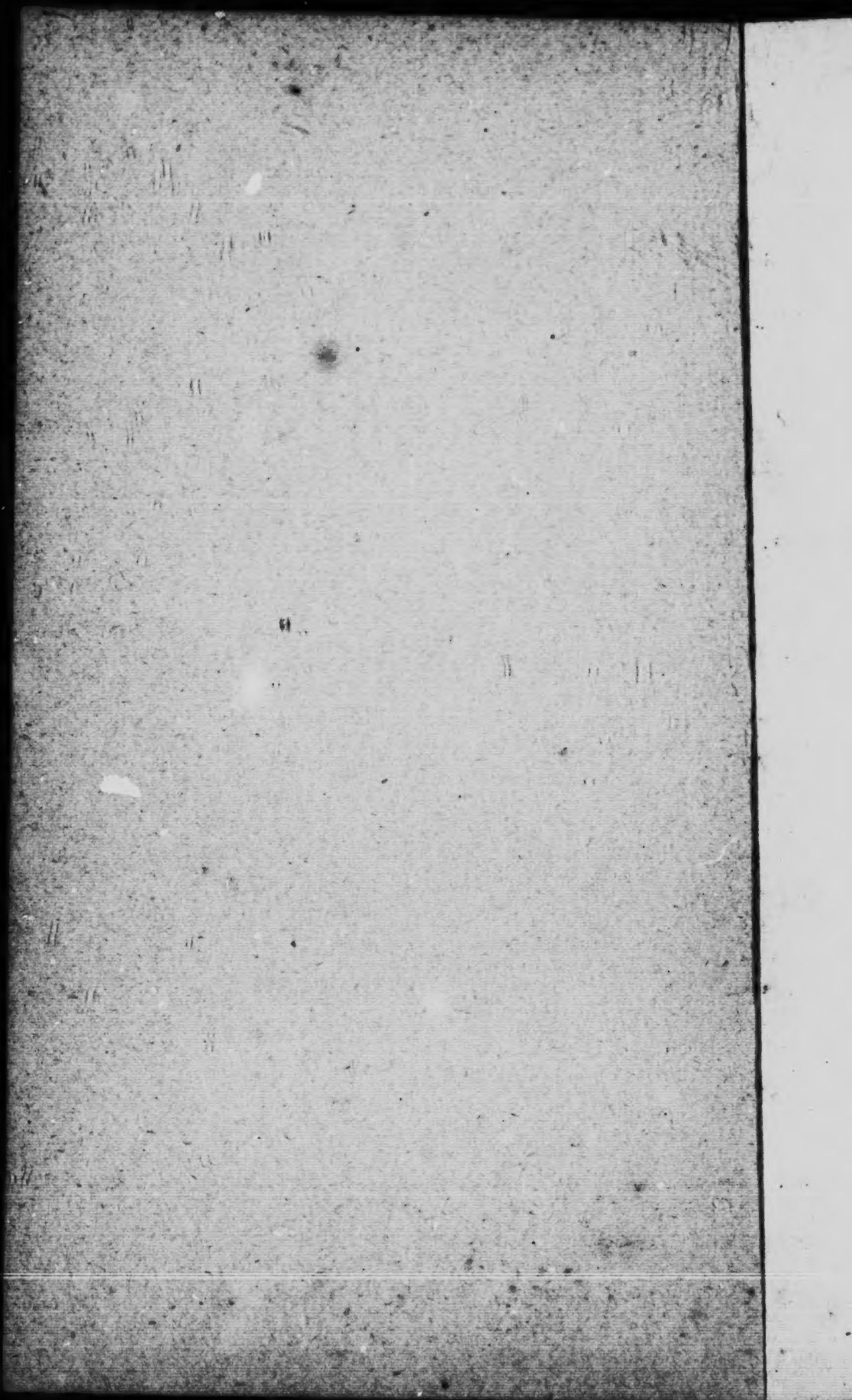
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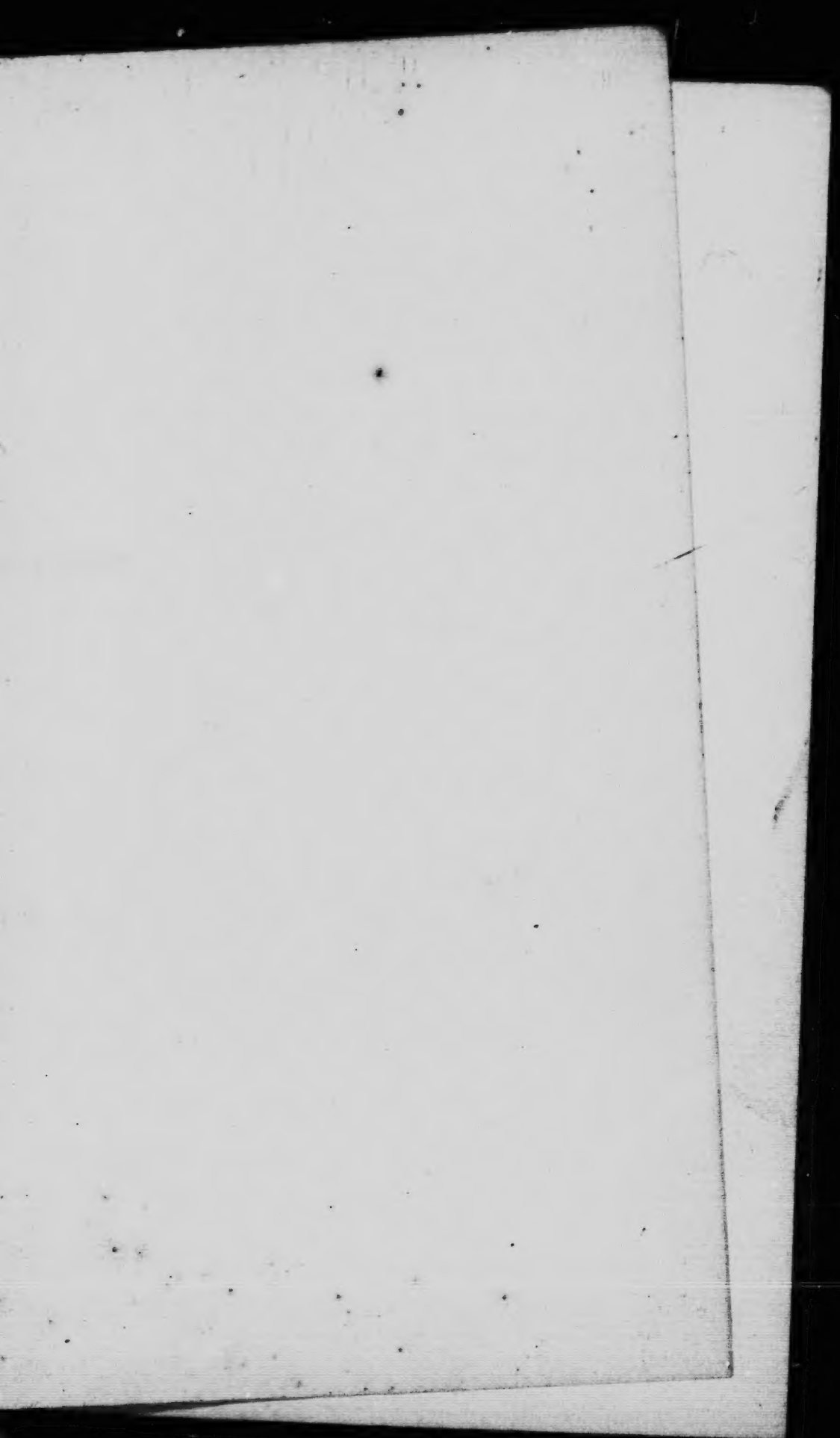
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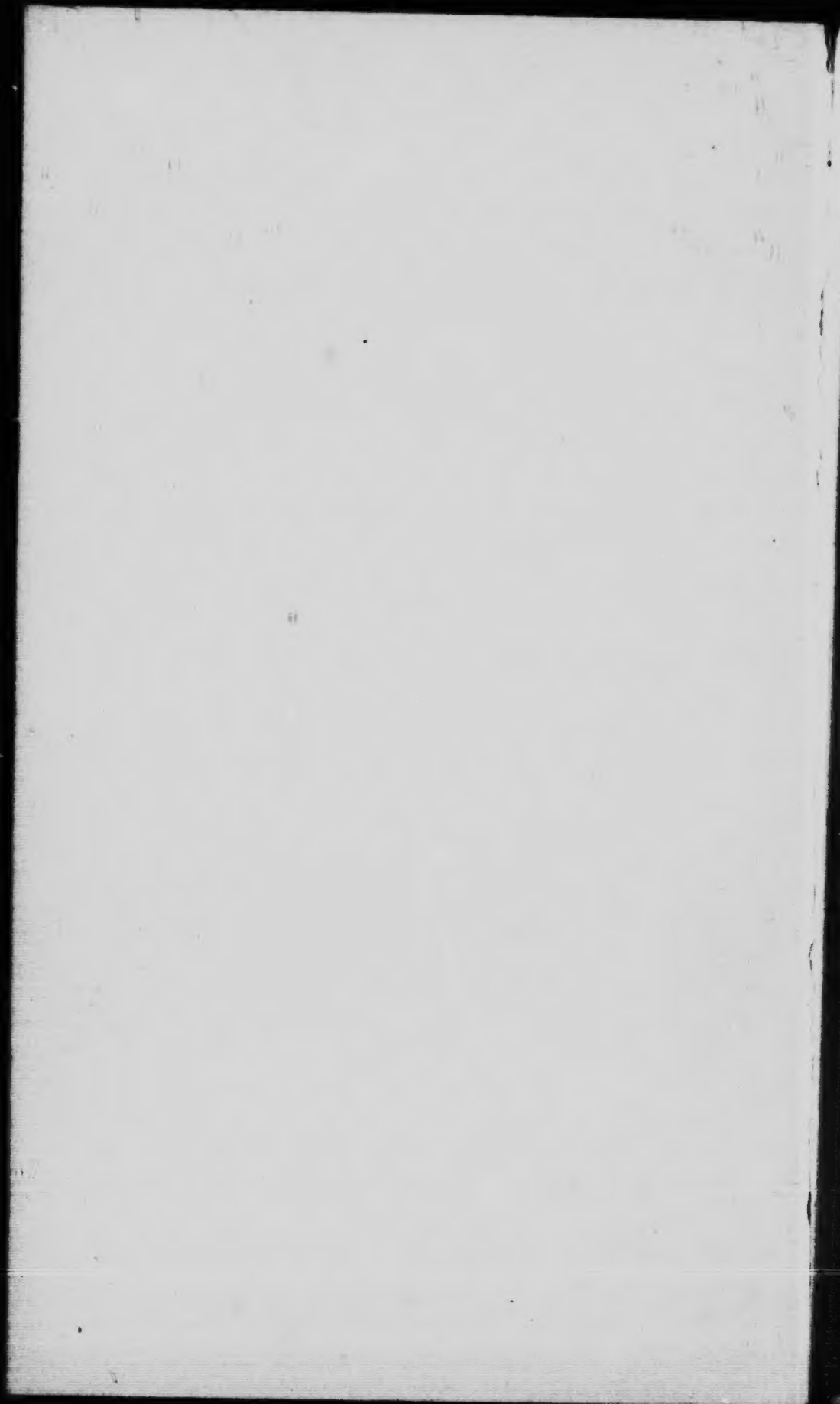
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*A Doctor of
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*A Doctor of
Philosophy*

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*Toronto
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1903*

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1903

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Published, August, 1903

TO
JAMES O'G. DUFFY
AUTHOR AND SCHOLAR
CRITIC AND FRIEND

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I

MAJOR ANTHONY PHŒBUS WHYOT, confident in his persuasive powers, as he was confident that he possessed all other faculties desirable in unlimited degree, had determined to reason with his nephew. Women have long since learned that profound physiological fact that the way to a man's heart — so at least we are told — is through his stomach. Through some little attrition with the governing sex during a long life Major Whyot had mastered that lesson. Therefore, as a judicious preliminary to the reasoning process, there was to be a dinner.

The Major had reserved a private room in the Loyal Club for this purpose. Reso-

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lutely turning his back upon the blandishments of Broad Street, he had so seated himself — and at the table, for the appointed hour had arrived — that his expected guest would be compelled to face the light. It was indeed a subdued light that came through the handsome hangings, for the Loyal Club was second to none in the quiet elegance of its fittings, but it was enough for the Major's design. The Major lived in a blaze of internal glory. Externally, however, subdued lights were in consonance with his tastes, which were modesty and simplicity carried to the height of arrogance!

Like a Philadelphian who belonged to his exclusive set the Major was a *bon vivant*, an epicure, at whose feet Lucullus might have sat — and learned lessons. If he had ever heard of Lucullus and his prodigalities, however, the Major would have despised him. The Roman epicure, naturally antedating William Penn, was nothing to the Major. He had just chosen

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a luncheon, the details of which shall be left to the reader's imagination and experience, but which the Major felt, with reason, could not fail profoundly to move his young nephew. The order had scarcely been delivered when to him entered the young man expected.

Doctor William Penn Whyot in no way resembled his uncle. The Major was typical of old Philadelphia. The doctor was not typical of any especial section of the city — not even of Philadelphia itself! By a singular atavism, for which in his secret heart the doctor devoutly gave thanks, his characteristics, physical and mental, which will appear in due course, were those of his grandmother on the paternal side. Suffice it for the present to say that he wasn't a bit of a Whyot either in thought, action, or appearance.

That is why the Major was so elaborately preparing to reason with him. Not on account of his alien appearance — from the Whyot standpoint — oh, no. That was

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a hopeless condition, although some change might have been effected — from the Whyot point of view again — if William Penn had only dispensed with that pointed Van Dyck beard he wore. There wasn't a single Whyot in the whole long — and it must be confessed somewhat ghastly — line on the walls of the Pine Street house, thought the Major with constantly renewing resentment, who had ever worn his beard in that way. Most of them had no beards at all, and those who condescended to mustaches, singularly resembled "Uncle Phæbus," as the doctor irrelevantly called the Major in his mind.

There was no doubt about the Major. He was a pocket edition of his ancestry. Two hundred years of unquestioned social supremacy had refined away their strength and sublimated their weakness, and the Major was the legitimate resultant. He was a dapper little man with thin aristocratic features, white closely cut hair and a very white mustache, whiter by contrast

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with his very red face. Except the doctor he was the last, as he was physically — also mentally — the smallest of the famous Philadelphia Whyots. He did not realize it, of course, but there had been a steady degeneration in the line, and the Major was the scion of a noble plant nearly gone to seed.

Nevertheless he still possessed some of the outward marks of his ancient race. After his lights, albeit they were not brilliant indeed, he was a gentleman — that is, if you measured him by his own definition of what a gentleman should be. One thing he did possess, and that was a full measure of the courage which had made the original Huguenot, de Vyault, brave the pressure of the Grand Monarch until the revocation of the Edict of Nantes beggared him in fortune and drove him to England; a resolution which enabled him to survive the disgrace of being forced into manual labor for a livelihood.

The Major's title, for instance, was no

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gim-crack epithet begot by militia service, but was honestly come by. He had volunteered promptly in '61, resigning his cornetcy in the City Troop to accept a captaincy in one of the Pennsylvania regiments. In the first battle he had been desperately wounded while leading a charge at the head of his men. He had been promoted for his gallantry and had forthwith resigned his commission when the war became so common that everybody came crowding into the ranks and he had to take orders from "the son of a tinker, by Jove!" — which was more than he could stand.

The fortunes of the original de Vyault had gone very low in England. Poverty of goods had induced some transient poverty of spirit in the earlier descendants — alas soon lost! At their nadir of misfortune, however, they had fallen under the influence of William Penn, turned Quaker, and with him had come to America.

The first Quaker Vyault — they discard-

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ed the "de" then — who came over had been a shoemaker. Malicious people said a barber, but the family always insisted upon St. Crispin as the patron saint of the early dispensation. Really, when you think of it, that was as low down as a Vyault, speedily metamorphosed into Whyot, could possibly go. They had begun at the feet of humanity in the new land, therefore, and it was evidence of their ability that they so speedily rose to its head. Such a line of magistrates, justices, financiers, merchant princes, soldiers, and sailors, could not be exhibited by any other family, either in the old Proprietary Province, or the succeeding Keystone State. They had attained the zenith of their fortunes at the beginning of the century — since then their progress had been the other way. They had at first stood still, then they had gone back. The Major was the last limit — downward; the doctor a protest — upward.

The family had gathered much money

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in their long advance. In its descent it had managed to retain it, even to increase it. The conservatism of Philadelphia had replaced the hot French blood, and whatever they had they held on to. The Major had the most of the property now, although the doctor was not without a comfortable fortune. When the words "much money" are used it may not be inferred that the Major's fortune was a vast one. It was ample for the Major, for any moderate gentleman. It might have run to a million, possibly, but there was nothing vulgar about it like the fortunes of the *nouveaux riches*, who lined Fifth Avenue, New York, with their palaces and filled Newport with the sound of their extravagances.

The Major had always enjoyed plenty, and possibly, therefore, he was not a judge of relative values, but, had he been forced to choose, he would have preferred his old Pine Street house and his high, square pew in St. Christopher's — like many Quakers

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they had become Church of England people and then Episcopalians of the "high" variety in due course — to almost all of his other worldly possessions. For the Major belonged to the oldest and most exclusive set in Philadelphia. Fortunately for Philadelphia and the rest of the country there were not many of them. Birth, brains, money, unless they had the hall-mark of Philadelphia upon them, were as nothing to the Major and his kind. The pretensions of the Southern cavalier amused him. The extravagances of the New York millionaire awakened his contempt. The arrogance of the Boston brain was — like the brain itself — a thing incomprehensible to him.

There were other people in Philadelphia besides the Major and his friends, something like a million and a quarter of them, but they did not count. They were simply there. They paid the interest on his bonds, enhanced the value of his stocks, and so contributed to his income; aside from that

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function he had little knowledge of, and less interest in, them. He was thoroughly satisfied with himself and his friends, with his position and his family, except his nephew, the doctor. There never had been a physician among the Whyots before. That was bad enough, "beastly pill rollin' business," so the Major phrased it. He could still recall how terrible had been the shock when the doctor's choice of a profession had been announced to him. What was the need of any profession? The first Whyots had been workers, beginning with the shoemaker, but conditions had altered; there was now no necessity for them to do any work more laborious than cutting coupons or preparing the list of guests for the annual Assembly balls.

Why had his nephew not elected to become a gentleman of elegant leisure like himself? the Major wondered, painfully. But he had managed to survive that blow and had become fairly reconciled to it when the news was carefully broken to

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him by his sister and the doctor's aunt, a widow who stood in a dead mother's place to the young man, that the hope of the family was engaged to be married! The breaking of the news was accompanied by the usual feminine evidences of internal cardiac disintegration. There was weeping and wailing, and but that even the best artificial sets did not gnash successfully, the old Biblical conditions would have been reproduced, even to teeth.

The violence of Madame's feelings were evidenced by this scene. The Whyots were distinctly undemonstrative, they prided themselves upon it, and that his sister should have given way to such emotions and in the presence of her brother — for whom she felt a holy awe as the head of their ancient and honorable house — was testimony to the depth and intensity of her grief and disappointment. There was excuse for it, though, and while the Major could not forgive such a display, he condoned it, when he learned — here was

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the rub — that William Penn Whyot was going to marry a nobody!

Her father did not have a house on Pine Street, would not have lived on Pine Street if the whole street had been given to him, although he had money enough to buy the whole street if he had wanted it. No, he lived out with the common people on North Broad Street, miles above Market Street, where he had the largest and handsomest house in many blocks.

“Why didn’t he go to New York, damn him,” soliloquized the Major, “where he belonged,” and live on Fifth Avenue overlooking the Park, which appeared to be laid out for the exclusive delectation of mortals favored by Plutus and the kindred gods? He was an anachronism, an absurdity in Philadelphia. He had no pew in old St. Christopher’s either. If he had ever entered that ancient edifice he would have considered it a musty, fusty, uncomfortable old building, any way. On the contrary, he actually occupied the finest

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seat in the brand new Holy Angels' Church; of which, in his grim way, he was one of the strongest supporters—financially, that is, for his piety was in an inverse ratio to his contributions.

Philip Chalden lived in Philadelphia because he owned the town. If choice had directed his footsteps to New York he probably would have owned that city also, but Philadelphia satisfied him as a possession. The majority of the citizens of Philadelphia fatuously believed that they governed themselves. A large portion of the minority did not care who governed them, so long as they were let alone. Another small but very aggressive portion knew that Philadelphia was governed by Philip Chalden, and they endeavored to make it interesting for him by their efforts to shake off their thralldom. A few hundreds, of the St. Christopher's set, of which the Major was the leading exponent, neither knew nor cared nor believed anything about it. If they thought of it at

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all, in some wildly intellectual moment, they were persuaded that they governed not merely Philadelphia, but the world itself. They were the people and wisdom would die with them.

The fatuous majority referred to used to hold elections from time to time and put a new man in the City Hall — at least he wore trousers and looked like a man outwardly, although he was merely a puppet — who would put other men, so called, but like unto himself, in various positions of trust — and profit — in his gift, such as the Director of Public Safety, the chiefs of the various subordinate bureaus, and so on. The little group of reformers used to meet enthusiastically and with one unpurchasable, and also largely unsalable, paper of small circulation, as their organ, furiously attack the government.

The government was Philip Chalden. He moved the Mayor, the Mayor moved the Director, the Director his chiefs of bureau, the chiefs of bureaus their various

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subordinates, till the bottom was reached, and the mass of the people, reformers and all, were moved — and great was the movement of them! Chalden moved the people in a great many ways. For instance, he owned the street railways and nobody was transported except in his cars. The reformers were transported with rage, but that counted for nothing. The press of the city with few exceptions was against the government, the exceptions being the papers that Chalden owned. He owned all that he wanted, or enough of them to carry his point, and he was indifferent to the censure of the few really great journals and the small — and unpurchasable — weekly. He would like to have that weekly, but when he found it impossible to buy it, or silence it, he suffered it to bark away — it didn't matter in the long run, said the cynical boss — and he was right.

So Chalden had power, such power as all the Whyots, dead and gone from the Major back to Adam, put together, if they

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could trace so far, had never enjoyed. I said the Major back to Adam advisedly, because it was inconceivable that the earth could ever have moved along without a Whyot to assist Providence in keeping things going; and the genealogical tree, which was the Major's fondest study, went back into pre-historic times with various wonderful authentications of its accuracy, not the least of which was the Major himself.

And then Philip Chalden not only had power politically, municipal power and therefore national power, but he had money besides. Indeed, in modern politics these two things seem to depend upon each other. He was director of heaven — or perhaps it would be better to say the other place — only knew how many corporations, and when Philip Chalden took his place on a Board of Directors, he usually became the whole Board. It was very simple. The function of a director is to direct. He directed. What his fellow directors thought

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or wished did not matter — at least not to Chalden. He owned the trolley system, the biggest shipyards on the Delaware, the greatest locomotive works; he was president of the largest bank, in fact men said if you investigated any sort of an enterprise — successful, that is — you would generally run up against Philip Chalden before you got through. If the poor little Major had but known it, he enjoyed the income of his million of invested dollars simply because Chalden disdained such game as he and did not bother with little things. The arrogance of that little section of Philadelphia for which the Major stood amused him, when he thought of it, and he tolerated it, let it alone — it did not matter!

In addition to his political and financial power Philip Chalden had birth and breeding and education as well. Here was no vulgar boss. Although no one knew it, he was born of one of the oldest and proudest families of St. Louis. While the Major

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and his friends had been exploiting themselves in Philadelphia Philip Chalden's ancestors had been playing great parts in the history of the nation. For reasons which were sufficient to him — and therefore nobody's business, he fondly fancied — Chalden had chosen in early life to abandon his family name and to forsake the United States. That appellation under which he was now known had nothing to do with his birth, although it was in some sort a family inheritance. He had quietly appeared in Philadelphia a score of years ago, coming from Italy, it was believed, or some other foreign land, without explanation, and had gone to work. He was a mystery in the beginning and had remained so, though there were many who would have given fortunes to penetrate the mystery and solve the secret men instinctively felt was locked in his own breast.

Chalden was an uncommunicative man who never told anybody anything. He let results speak for him, and they spoke in no

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uncertain tones. His manners were polite enough, but hard and masterful. He had been brutalized by unlimited success, morally, that is, just as the Major's forebears had been weakened by it — the difference was temperamental. The Major scorned humanity, and holding himself aloof from it let it alone. Chalden hated it, mastered it, ruined it, flung it away, gasping, crushed and broken. The Major would scorn to do a mean thing, though the petty was his frequent path; the financier would not stoop to do a petty thing, though he allowed no scruple to stop him in a grand coup.

Chalden had already been offered a cabinet position; had he been willing to clear up the doubt about his nationality, he might have had the nomination for President of the United States — a thing the Major would not have accepted under any circumstances. The Major was like the *de Rohans* — a king he could not be, there was nothing else to tempt him. He was a Whyot. The Major and Chal-

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den were an admirable pair to contemplate. Both were thoroughly American products. There are many Majors — in Philadelphia — and not a few Chaldens there and everywhere.

Chalden had been a college man and in youth had mingled in the best society in the United States. Now he mingled in no society at all. He lived alone in his big house on North Broad Street, and few there were who entered it. He transacted his business in the Chalden building, near Fifth and Chestnut streets, and his whole private life was a thing apart from public affairs. There was no Mrs. Chalden. There had been one, but there was none now, and the family comprised himself and his daughter Alicia. It was Alicia with whom Dr. William Penn Whyot was about to taint the pure stock of the Whyots by allying himself to her, in what the Major would have characterized as unholy wedlock. It would have been disgraceful enough under any circumstances, but so

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long as the Major remained unmarried Dr. William Penn Whyot was the last of his line, and unless the old man married and kept up the stock without vulgar cross, why there would come a day eventually when no adequate representative of the ancient family would be found to give that distinction to Philadelphia which made neighboring cities so madly envious of its assured claim!

There had always been an Anthony Phœbus Whyot—so named from the Huguenot progenitor—and a William Penn Whyot. The older had been Anthony Phœbus and the younger scion William Penn right along. If William Penn now married Alicia Chalden it was conceivable that there might be a Chalden Whyot, perhaps with a “damned hyphen between ‘em!” Such a thing was little less than sacrilege in the Major’s mind.

It was therefore with an anxiety which can scarcely be imagined that, after hearing the direful news from his sister, he had

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arranged to meet his nephew at the Loyal Club on Broad Street and, after the best luncheon he could evolve, reason him out of his infatuation.

II

MAJOR WHYOT had never been genuinely in love. It was a habit or an attribute of the Major's to be loved but to love not. He would not have proclaimed it, but he cherished in his heart the conviction that many women had been in love with him in his younger days and that there had not existed a maiden who would not have stooped eagerly to lift the handkerchief if he had dropped it. Consequently, through his own lack of experience in the consuming fire, Major Whyot was ignorant of the fact that even backed by a good dinner reason stood little chance in a trial of strength with love. Wrapped in the garment of his own self-esteem he was equally unconscious that, contrasting his own personality and that of his nephew, he was at a great disadvantage in the latter case as in the former.

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William Penn Whyot, it has been said, and it was borne into the Major's soul that afternoon as never before, did not resemble his ancestry at all. The Major's glance comprehended his own dapper, faultlessly clad, and entirely correct, if rather undersized, person, and sighed at the difference between himself and his nephew. Of a distinctly Teutonic type, tall, broad-shouldered, blond, keen eyed, redolent of life, energy, confidence, and hearty self-satisfaction, he was the Major's antithesis in almost everything. Therefore the sigh of the Major was one of commiseration for William Penn. By the way, it was only within the family circle that he was so known. The girls who had loved him called him Will. His Philadelphia intimates affectionately styled him Billie, or in *bon camaraderie*, Bill. At his college — Harvard — he was known as "The Quaker," shortened to "Quake," or "Old Quake," when they won the first

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foot-ball game from Yale in years largely through his prowess.

The personality of the younger man filled the room when he entered it. The Major actually seemed to grow smaller in his presence. That is, he would have seemed smaller had there been any one beside the decorous waiter to mark the situation. What he seemed to do and what he really did were different, however. As William Penn entered he swelled with resentment, like a turkey cock, longing for nothing so much as to call him to account then and there. However, he restrained himself for the present with what he considered a marvellous self-control, and answered the young man's hearty "Good afternoon, Uncle Anthony," with what he fancied was a kindly, even an affectionate, cordiality. William Penn had the original Whyot voice, deep, strong, virile, masculine. The Major's voice, like his person and his mind, was also gone to seed. It

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was thin, high-pitched, and unpleasantly effeminate. It satisfied the Major, however, and his nephew had heard it too often to mark it especially.

Restraining the temptation to plunge *in medias res* at once, the Major pointed to the table. William Penn sat down, with a word of explanation that he had been detained by a professional call, and the cocktails were solemnly produced. The Major's idea of the process of reasoning was that it began with a cocktail. That singularly fatuous habit was not an exclusive Philadelphia custom, by the way, and if he had known how common the practice was the Major might have abandoned it. They were not "Club Cocktails" either; no Manhattan, Martini, or other ready-made compound for him! The Major would as soon have thrust his legs into a ready-made pair of trousers, or have eaten what he called a "bulk olive," as to have poured a ready-made cocktail down his aristocratic throat. His at least were al-

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ways made to order after a recipe time-honored in the club—furnished by one of his ancestors, by the way.

"The thing I like about a cocktail," remarked the doctor, genially, "is its local color."

"Ye-es," answered the Major, feeling after the intellectual puzzle which this remark presented, "er—it is warming inwardly—and—er—stimulating. A pleasant introduction to a dinner."

"Yes, sir, you are right. The local color is mainly internal, but it is quite perceptible otherwise, as well."

"Yes," cackled the Major, groping for the point and reaching it finally. It was a touch of the Whyot wit, he thought, and he was glad to recognize it in William Penn. "But sometimes it is external, too—er—the local color, if you have enough of it—the cocktail, I mean!"

"Good," said Doctor William Penn, gravely, "I am glad you caught on, uncle. That's what I meant."

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The Major felt somewhat dashed by this rebuff, but the excellence of his dinner — and it was certainly a good one, the Major being a past master at that — reassured him, and it was with high hopes that he marked course after course disappear. William Penn's appetite was certainly a noble one. With the arrival of the coffee and cigars and the disappearance of the waiter, the talk which the young man had mainly kept up in the flippant style of the beginning, began, under the Major's judicious guidance, to take a serious turn.

"William Penn Whyot," said the Major, pushing back his chair after a graceful, well-bred, and somewhat meditative puff at his cigar — and by the way, the Major, in common with many of his fellow citizens in Philadelphia, eliminated the "h" when it followed "w," and Whyot became "W'yot," "white" became "w'ite," "wheat" "w'eat," and so on. That wasn't the only peculiarity of his

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accent either. When he pronounced the word "know," for instance, he inserted an "a" before the "o," and softened the resulting diphthong until it was a cross between the southern drawl and the Yankee twang, with results strange to hear.

"William Penn Whyot," he continued solemnly and impressively, "I have brought you here — ah — to reason with you."

"Go ahead, nunkie," remarked William Penn irreverently, puffing away at his cigar with characteristic energy.

"William Penn," said the old man, "you know that odious appellation is distinctly unpleasant to me. As the matter before us is — er — serious, I could wish that your mood would be likewise."

"I beg your pardon, Uncle Anthony," said the young man, "I am all attention."

"I learn from your aunt, sir, that you are contemplating — er — holy matrimony."

"Your information is quite correct, sir."

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"And that — er — the — ah — young person —"

"Hold on there! She — er — isn't what you call a 'person,' Uncle Anthony."

"We will pass that over for the present," said the older man solemnly. "Shall I say for — er — argument's sake — the — ah — object of your affection?"

"Well, sir, that is a truthful description."

"She — er — is, so I am informed — in — in — short — I — ah —"

The Major was hopelessly floundering, but William Penn gave him no possible assistance. In fact, there was a look in the blue eyes of the young man, a little glint which was sufficient to warn even so obtuse and self-centred a person as the Major that there were limits beyond which even he could not pass.

"The young lady," gasped out the Major finally, "doesn't appear — er — ah — to be one of us." — The objective case, that pronoun, of the ancestral "We"!

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"She is not, at least not yet—and I hope to Heaven she never will be," the doctor might have added if he had voiced his real thought.

"The lady, I am told, is the daughter of — of a man — named Chalden, or something of the sort?"

"Your information is quite correct, sir."

"Mr. Chalden is — well, in fact, I know nothing about him."

"He owns half of Philadelphia."

"My dear William Penn Whyot," remarked the Major, "the man may own four-fifths of it, or nine-tenths of it, or ninety-nine hundredths of it. I know very little of that portion of Philadelphia, and I want to know less. Who owns such people is a matter of indifference to me, as I suppose it is largely to them. I suppose we are obliged to have the lower classes —"

"Or the interest on your bonds would not be paid, Uncle Anthony."

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"Quite so, and having paid the interest they cease to interest me further," said Uncle Anthony, serenely, waving his hand as if to dismiss a topic which was of no especial importance. "But this man — er — Chalden, is it not? — doesn't own me."

"He might if he wanted to," thought the doctor.

"And the people of Philadelphia, at least among those with whom I mingle, do not know him. Now, my dear William Penn Whyot, a moment's reflection will, I am sure, convince you of the manifest impropriety of allying your blood with — er — that of Mr. Chalden. The Whyots for generations have married none but the best people in Philadelphia, and as you are the last of the line — I shall never marry — there is a burden laid upon you by your ancestors, the obligation of your race, sir. Honor demands that you should be exceedingly careful in your choice of a — er —"

"Honor demands, Uncle Anthony, that

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I should marry to please myself, not my ancestors. But I have been careful. She is perfect, sir; and to be quite frank with you, I don't care a rap for all the Whyots dead and gone as compared to Al — Miss Chalden."

"My dear William Penn!" remonstrated the Major sadly, outraged by such irreverence, "you must be — er — in love."

"Well, Uncle, aren't most people who 'contemplate matrimony' in love?"

"People of the vulgar sort, I believe, are prone to — er — the passion. Now, I — ah — contemplated matrimony several times in my early career, but never with such feelings as those which seem to actuate you."

"Perhaps that's why you never married?"

"No, no. To tell the truth, there were no particularly attractive girls in our circle at the time, and rather than marry outside of it I concluded to remain a bachelor. It

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was a great sacrifice, but I depended on you to — ah — carry on the line.”

“ Well, uncle, I’m sorry I can’t please you, but I’m not built that way.”

“ Conditions are different now, William Penn,” urged the other; “ there are, I have noticed, a number of young women of our acquaintance, who would be eminently suited to you, who are possessed of the necessary birth, some little means, although you will lack for nothing when I die, and charms of person — er — sufficient to make the union I propose not distasteful. There are Miss ——”

“ Hold on, Uncle Anthony, don’t mention the young ladies’ names. I should not like to refuse them even to you, and it would be no use anyway, as I am in love with Miss Chalden and I intend to marry her.”

“ It’s that damned Harvard College that has done this,” the Major burst out wrathfully, his quivering self-control utterly gone, and the combination between his

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feeble voice, his flushed face, and the intensity of his language almost moved the doctor to laughter. "If you hadn't gone there you would never have escaped from the influence of Philadelphia. I wanted you to follow in the footsteps of your fathers at the old University, but you would go to that accursed Boston, where what they call brains takes precedence over everything a gentleman holds dear. It is either that or your grandmother. One *mésalliance* in the family breeds another. My great-grandfather almost broke his heart when your grandfather married a Putbus of Germantown, and damn it all, sir, you look like her! You're not a bit of a Whyot in anything. We did the best we could for you before you were born by marrying your father to my poor sister. She was a Whyot of the purest blood, his cousin, and I thought we could break up the infernal cross. And when she died your aunt, my sister, did her best to instill proper principles in you. But I see we

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didn't succeed, sir. Who are these Chalden people, anyhow?"

The Major was fluent enough when he was excited as now. William Penn was sorely angered but at the same time amused by his uncle's language. He had never enjoyed the pleasure of seeing his grandmother, the "Putbus of Germantown," and he did not feel inclined to take up any vigorous cudgels in her behalf, yet it did not seem quite gallant of him to allow the unoffending old lady to be reviled without making some defence for her. However, he realized what a shock his approaching marriage would be to his uncle, and, as he was genuinely fond of the queer little old man, he controlled himself as best he could and answered him gently.

"Well, uncle, to be frank with you, I know very little about the Chalden family. They came here some years ago from Italy or some foreign land, yet they are Americans. Miss Chalden told me that her father never talks about it, but she believes

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they originally sprang from St. Louis — that is not generally known, and you will kindly not mention it, sir? ”

“ From St. Louis? ” interrupted the Major fiercely. “ St. Louis? Where in Heaven’s name is the place? ”

“ In Missouri, sir. ”

“ Good God, sir, you don’t mean the West? ” in a tone which the Pharisees might have used when they asked if anything good could have come out of Nazareth.

“ I do, sir. If you will recall it, sir, St. Louis is as old as Philadelphia. I think it was settled before Philadelphia, if I am not mistaken, and I have no doubt these people are just as good as —— ”

“ William Penn, ” cried the Major fiercely, “ stop there! You don’t know what you are saying! You will thank me in your cooler moments. Preserve your temper. Look at me, sir! ”

The little man was fairly trembling with excitement and emotion.

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"Well," said William Penn, smiling in spite of himself, "whatever her family may be, I am going to marry her, not her ancestors. She is ——"

"Spare me," sneered the Major scornfully, "I am in no mood to listen to the rhapsodies of a lover. What's her name?"

"Alicia."

"Alicia!" snorted the old man, "what sort of a damned fancy name is that? If you will marry the woman, why couldn't she have a name like Maria, or — er — Elizabeth, or Sophia, like — er — the females of our house. By gad, sir — Alicia! It sounds — er — foreign — and — er — I don't like it!"

"‘There was no thought of pleasing you when she was christened,’ sir," dryly answered the doctor, flinging in the quotation deftly, the opening for it was so good.

"I suppose not, sir, and yet they might have done worse things than attempting to pleasure the Whyots in the naming of any

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child," put in the old Major with unconscious humor.

"Of course, of course," answered his nephew; "but, seriously, uncle, Miss Alicia Chalden is a woman endowed with every grace of mind and person. She is a graduate of Brookford College, a Doctor of Philosophy of that famous institution, and a woman any man might be proud to wed. It is no *mésalliance*, as you have said, and that I have won her affection amazes and surprises as much as it delights me."

"But her family, her family, sir?"

"When you see Mr. Chalden you will be ready to consider him the Rudolph of Hapsburg of his family, I am sure."

"But, my dear William Penn — St. Louis! It's quite impossible, I assure you. Where do they come from? Who are they? What patents of nobility are back of them?"

"As to that, I don't know, and I care less."

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"And that man Chalden, he lives north of Market Street, on North Broad, actually" — the Major fairly gasped as he enunciated this direful fact, which certainly could not fail to disgust any rational being. "Think of it! You don't want to get involved with any of those north of Market Street people, William Penn. Why, he is mixed up with all sorts of vulgar business — er — trade, and all that!"

"Yes, I believe he is," answered the doctor composedly; "perhaps his original ancestor may have been a shoemaker, or — possibly a barber."

"William Penn!" said the Major, wincing under this bald and brutal thrust, "I fear you are hopeless. It's that cursed Putbus blood."

"Pshaw, Uncle Anthony, he has a great many irons in the fire, I suppose, but what of it? For that matter, they say he owns most of Philadelphia. I am sure I don't know, but I understand that he is a director

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in about everything that is worth directing, and if the papers are true he is the political boss of the town. But I am not marrying Alicia for her family, or her father's money, but because I — love her."

"William Penn," said the Major, nerv-
ing himself for the final plunge, "as — the
— er — head of the Whyot family, I say
my last word on the subject to you. I for-
bid this marriage. Should it take place I
will revoke the will I have made in which
you are my sole legatee, and devise my
fortune elsewhere."

"My dear uncle," said the doctor, ris-
ing and taking the limp, unresisting hand
of his uncle in his own strong one, "to
lose your friendship and affection would
be a great blow to me. I will not say that
I would be indifferent to the loss of your
fortune, though I hope in any event the
day when I shall enjoy it may long be
deferred ——"

"You shall never enjoy it unless you
abandon this monstrous marriage you are

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about to — er — perpetrate," interrupted the old man.

"But should you will your property elsewhere my chief regret would be because that was a mark of your displeasure. I will be frank with you. It may be the Putbus plainness, or the Whyot honesty — the Whyots were always men of honor. Alicia Chalden is worth a million fortunes like yours and that of her father combined, and I shall never give her up under any circumstances so long as she honors me with her affection. Don't do anything in a hurry, Uncle Anthony. Wait until I have the pleasure of presenting her to you. Good-by, sir," and before the dazed Major could gather his wits together and recover from the shock which the bold but kindly tempered young man had inflicted upon him, Doctor William Penn Whyot had vanished from the room.

The Major sat and rubbed his head with his hand meditatively for a moment, until finally through the wreck of his plans

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arose the glimmerings of an idea. He looked at his watch. It was seven o'clock. They had dined early on account of some previous engagements. The man would not be at his office at that hour. He would be at his home. Pressing a button, the Major ordered his carriage. He had taken a desperate resolution. He would go to see Philip Chalden in person about this iniquitous marriage, which must be stopped at all hazards.

III

TIME was when all coachmen were negroes. The Major's rule of life was contained in the military phrase, "As you were!" He followed the ancient practice long after others had bowed to the modern innovation, and a few families to whom the habits of the Whyots were oracular did likewise. As a matter of fact, however, the Major's black coachman and footman were unique even in Philadelphia, where the thing that has been is the thing that shall be until the end of the chapter. All the Major's servants were negroes, therefore, and he took pride and pleasure in the fact.

The distance between the Loyal Club and the big new granite house on North Broad Street was soon compassed, and almost before he had developed his campaign, or even outlined his plan of attack,

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he found himself in the drawing-room waiting the master. As he sat there he inspected the room quickly, curiously, and somewhat contemptuously. It was in perfect taste. That could not be gainsaid. The pictures on the walls, the bric-à-brac on the magnificent mantel, the furniture, the carpets, the decorations, all were of the rarest and most beautiful variety, but they were new. The Major was the oldest thing in that room, and in spite of the fact that he did dress in the latest fashion, he looked as old as his ancestry. The Major was surprised, he did not know that such things existed — north of Market Street! To him entered Philip Chalden.

The millionaire was of the physical appearance which naturally accords with the title. He was a large, stout, powerfully built, full-bearded man, with a keen, piercing eye, firm, straight lips and resolute jaw. His once black hair and full beard were lightened with gray. He was con-

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siderably past middle age, though somewhat younger than the Major. The Major was never impressed by anyone but himself, but to ordinary mortals there was something oppressive in the presence of this man. He absorbed power from his environment with such directness that a sensation of weakness was produced among those who approached him. Feeble men gave up at once and submitted to his domination, stronger men struggled against it, often unavailingly. In many instances his personality excited admiration and devotion. Sometimes, but more rarely, it awakened antagonisms, furious, intense, persistent. Few people could be indifferent to it. It was only egregious and colossal self-satisfaction, such as the Major possessed, upon which it had no perceptible effect one way or the other.

The man was cold, reserved, distant, dignified, repellent, to the last degree, yet his manner was admirable. Truth to tell, his satisfaction with himself was probably

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as great as that of the Major with himself, yet there was this further difference between the two, one had much reason to be satisfied, the other had little. Yet, after all, reason has no more to do with self-satisfaction than it has to do with love, and love is only self-satisfaction extended to embrace somebody else.

"Major Whyot," said Mr. Chalden, looking up from the card in his hand as the Major rose on his entrance.

"The same, sir."

"Be seated, sir. You are of Philadelphia, I presume?"

"Why, of course, sir! I am surprised that—" gasped out the Major in astonishment.

The natural way to put the question according to the Major was to say that Philadelphia was of him, since the greater contains the less, and he was petrified at the idea that Mr. Chalden did not know who he was.

"Of course! I am surprised that you

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ask such a question, sir!" he exploded wrathfully. "I have been here for two hundred years at least, sir!"

As usual, the little Major was confusing himself with his ancestry.

"Ah, indeed," said Mr. Chalden, the faintest flicker of a smile beneath his heavy mustache; "I did not know" — which was not exactly an accurate statement. "You wish to see me?"

"Yes, sir. I come in behalf of my nephew, Doctor William Penn Whyot."

"I see."

"I wish to speak to you about this — er — marriage with your — ah — daughter, sir."

"And does your nephew wish you to plead his cause, sir?"

"God bless me, sir, certainly not!"

"I am rejoiced to hear it, Major Whyot, for the little I have seen of that young man has convinced me that he is abundantly able to plead his own cause."

"You are quite right," answered the

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Major, "in fact I think he is a little too able. His assurance ——"

"My dear sir, you cannot succeed nowadays without assurance. It is assurance that wins modern battles. I half believe it won them in the past."

"Yes," said the Major vaguely, utterly ignorant that he was a living example of the worst kind of assurance, that which has no basis or reason for being, "but I — er — this approaching marriage ——"

"Well, sir, to be frank, I have not yet decided whether I shall consent to the marriage or not."

"God bless my soul, sir!" spluttered the Major, "do you mean to tell me that you can hesitate for a single moment at the opportunity opened by — er — the enthusiasm of a misguided youth, for allying yourself, your family — ah — with the Whyots, sir! Why, sir, a marriage with a Whyot is putting the hall mark of respectability — the — er — upon ——"

The Major pulled himself up just in

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time. There was a tightening of Mr. Chalden's gloomy brow, a little brighter flash from his steel-gray eye, that flung a danger signal across the Major's path. He wasn't afraid of anybody, this little Major, but he was a gentleman according to his lights, and he would not charge his message with any unnecessary rudeness. He had said enough, anyway.

"Well, Major," said Mr. Chalden gravely, as the little gentleman's speech went up into the air, "you are an able and eloquent advocate. I confess that I had not looked at the matter in that light, but since you make such a point of it, and since it is in evidence from the zeal with which you plead the young man's cause that your consent and approbation will not be withheld in case the marriage be arranged, I shall be apt to think favorably of your nephew's plea."

"You entirely misunderstand me, sir," gasped the Major impetuously, "I do not wish it at all."

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"But you said the honor of an alliance with a Whyot——"

"Yea, sir, and it would be an honor, but it is much too great an honor for an unknown daughter of an unknown man, sir."

Chalden kept his temper admirably. That was one source of his power. Like William the Silent he was tranquil in the midst of storms. It is true, he usually raised the storms himself and the tranquillity was easier on that account, but to the big, powerful man the wrathful, squeaky little Major, with his ancestry, his arrogance, and his pride, was an object rather of pity and contempt than antagonism.

"Frankly, sir," answered the great financier, "I fancy I am sufficiently well known in this community. My name — I speak in strict confidence as one gentleman to another, sir" — the little Major bowed coldly at this, and Chalden knew that he was to be trusted, too — "is one which I have made myself. I will say to you what

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I have said to no other man, that I have a legal right to bear another name, a legal and moral right, sir. I was born an Avery of St. Louis. You will respect my confidence, I am sure?"

The Major bowed again—really, from some points of view, Mr. Chalden was not so bad after all!

"My family there, I take it, though it is a matter of supreme indifference to me personally, is as old as your own," continued Chalden, who divined that by placing the matter on the little Major's honor he was perfectly safe in revealing what he had confided to no one else — not even his daughter. "My original ancestor was a fur trader. What was yours, sir?"

"A shoe — it is of no consequence at all, sir," answered the Major in some confusion. "Pray proceed, Mr. Ch — Avery."

"Excuse me, Major Whyot. I have assumed the name of Chalden for reasons which are good and sufficient to me, and

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I desire to be addressed by it, and not by the name of Avery. I repeat, that this is told to you in strict confidence, which the proposed relationship between our families warrants."

"And your reasons, sir?"

"Concern no one but myself, sir. As you know, I am a man of fortune."

"I know nothing about it, sir," said the Major; "my observations of life and society are confined to my own associates."

"The facts are as I have stated them."

"It may be," responded the other; "of course you understand that money or the lack of it has nothing to do with my — er — opposition to the marriage."

"Certainly it has not in my case," answered Chalden coolly, "else I would look for a higher alliance even than one with the heir of your ancient lineage, and whatever other possessions you may have. However, my daughter has chosen to fall in love with your nephew. So at least she has confided to me. The circumstances of

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their meeting were somewhat romantic. Doctor Whyot has approached me in a manly and dignified manner and asked my consent to a marriage. I am favorably impressed with him, but I have taken the matter under advisement, and will decide the matter when I have made certain investigations concerning his character and ability. Should I find Doctor Whyot deserving, as I trust he may be, I shall probably give my consent."

The man was magnificent in his cool assumption of superiority, and the Major was fast losing all control of himself. The idea of his taking that ground with anyone who bore the Whyot name. It was infamous!

"But, good heavens, sir!" he burst out, "do you not see the manifest impropriety of such a marriage?"

"What is the impropriety, sir?"

"Why, you are not — er — your daughter doesn't — er — in short, sir, you do not belong to the people — you know —

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the — ah — the society in which I mingle. My ancestors have had a pew in St. Christopher's church since the church was built, sir, and we have lived in the same house on Pine Street for one hundred and fifty years! Why, sir, I was born in the same bed my great-great-great-grandfather was born in! We are the oldest, the purest blooded people in the United States, sir, and you wish me to consent to a marriage between your daughter and my nephew! The daughter of a man who, for reasons known only to himself, passes under a name not his own! And to my nephew, the last of his line, sir! "

"Let me hear no more in this strain, sir!" said Chalden peremptorily and with emphasis. "I beg to point out to you that I am neither asking nor expecting your consent. I do not care a snap of my finger for your consent to the marriage of my daughter and your nephew. My daughter shall marry whom she pleases, provided I please. Your claims to social

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distinction are absolutely nothing to me. I care nothing for society, except to despise it. So far as your family is concerned, I may tell you frankly that if I saw in your nephew the least resemblance to the ancestral traits you exhibit, I should instantly, without hesitation, deny his suit and forbid any further intercourse between my daughter and himself."

"But, sir—" shouted the Major, at least he came as near shouting as his vocal apparatus permitted.

"Excuse me further," interrupted Chalden, "you have come to my house uninvited, and you have made yourself unwelcome. I have borne with your slurs and insults longer than I am accustomed to bear. In fact, no one ever before presumed in such a manner. My patience is ended. My family is as good as yours. My manners, this interview has proved, are infinitely better than yours. You are a living example of that arrogance and ignorance which are characteristics of that deluded

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set which claims to represent all that is best in Philadelphia, in the United States, in the world itself, for that matter. I have marked you and your *confrères* in secret amusement heretofore. You have not been worth serious attention, but, sir, if I hear any more from you, or your friends, I will break you to pieces! I will submit to no more insults, to no more sneers, to no more innuendoes from you. I will marry my daughter to your nephew or not, just as I please, and if you value your house on Pine Street, or your pew in St. Christopher's, in God's name, sir, go back to the one or to the other and keep quiet. Learn for the first time in your life the truth, unwelcome though it will doubtless be, that you live here and enjoy your petty position on sufferance, my sufferance. I hold Philadelphia, and you, and all of you, in the hollow of my hand. If my daughter wishes, she can have it all. She is all I have. Why, you poor little relic of the past, if she wanted to marry you, and I

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thought fit to allow her, you might get down on your knees and thank Providence for her decision."

"Heaven forbid!" gasped the Major; "and let me tell you, sir, that I value your threats not at all. My birth, breeding, and position in society do not depend upon wealth or money, or a house on Pine Street, or a pew in St. Christopher's. Why, sir, I am a Whyot! That means little to you, but it means everything to me. I have warned you, sir, that nothing but unhappiness can come from such a *mésalliance*. I wash my hands of it, and I have the honor to wish you good-evening."

With some show of dignity the little Major retreated from the ground where he had been so signally defeated. He had tried to reason with the lover, also with the father, in both cases without avail. There remained to him no other resource. The lady herself was out of the question. She would probably weep, and the Major was hopeless before weeping women. He

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had done all that could be done to prevent the marriage. William Penn must go to ruin in his own way.

Late as it was the Major drove to his lawyer and wrathfully left with him instructions to draw up a new will in the morning.

To understand how things got into such a dreadful tangle, from the little Major's point of view, it will be necessary to turn back several months and then pick up the thread.

IV

"GIRLS, girls, are you all here?"

The anxious voice of the swiftly approaching principal, trembling with anxiety, could be heard above the nervous clamor of the young women, the cries of the men, and the roaring of the flames. She was dressed in an evening gown, with a shawl dragging from one shoulder. As she ran up hurriedly she scanned the group in terrified apprehension. At the sight of her they broke into exclamations and cries, confused and unintelligible.

"Young ladies, be quiet!" she continued, nervously raising her hand in her best class-room manner. "Remember, that to be composed in the midst of difficulties is the highest test of breeding—" she could not refrain from this act of instruction even in the excitement attendant upon the fire, and indeed she was the

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coolest person there, maintaining her self-control admirably. "Is anyone missing, I say? Sarah, Margaret, Eloise, Alicia ——?"

There was no response as she called this name.

"Where is Alicia?" she added in a sharp tone of voice. "Has anyone seen her? You, Janet?"

"Indeed, Miss Winthrop," answered the girl thus addressed, "I don't know where she can be. She followed me out, I thought."

"Have any of you seen her?" asked the principal hurriedly. "Call her."

"Alicia!"

"Alicia!"

"Alicia!" burst from the startled group of women, young and old, in shrill screams, in which, as they afforded a sort of relief to the tension of the exciting moment, they persisted hysterically.

There was no answer to their frantic cries.

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"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Miss Winthrop at last, waving for silence again. "She must be in there."

The eyes of all stopped roaming the field and were fastened instantly upon the burning building, from every window of which, in the front at least, the flames were pouring. One or two of the girls began whimpering, one of them screamed wildly again, but the most of them stared in horrified silence. Where was Alicia? The truth dawned upon them at once. She was there! Merciful Heaven!

Hulswood Hall, the oldest dormitory building of Brookford College, had caught fire in one end at ten o'clock that night, and was now blazing furiously. The seniors, who were quartered in this building, had barely escaped with their lives, so fierce and sudden had been the spread of the flames through the old building. In all stages of *déshabille* they clustered around their principal and her assistants,

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who, from the nearest dormitories, were arriving in swift succession on the campus in front of the burning building. The girls of the other classes were being held in the other dormitories, making preparation for leaving them should it be necessary, which, on account of their isolation, was scarcely probable.

Hulswood Hall was an ancient Revolutionary mansion around which Brookford College had arisen. It had been presented to the college years before by the Whyot family in memory of a cognate and allied family—the Hulswoods were thus distinguished because one of them had married a Whyot. The college buildings were located in a lovely and sequestered valley some distance from the little town of Brookford, which had grown up around the railroad station of the same name not far from Philadelphia.

There was no adequate provision for fighting such a fire, and there was nothing much to be done save to let it burn. The

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few male servants and other employees of the college, under the direction of the professors, and these women showed themselves cool indeed, were engaged in wetting the roofs and taking other precautions to save the adjoining buildings. Hulswood Hall was doomed. To have it burned was bad enough, but when the consciousness burst upon the now thoroughly alarmed group of girls and women that Alicia Chalden was missing the situation became appalling.

Grasping her dress in one hand and dropping her shawl, Miss Winthrop, motioning the girls to remain where they were, ran toward two or three of the men who were busied in front of the doorway of the hall, removing further away some furniture which had been brought out and piled on the lawn before the flames got much headway.

"Al — Miss Chalden is in there!" she screamed. "One thousand dollars, five thousand, ten thousand, fifty thousand—"

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she knew Mr. Chalden's wealth and affection would warrant any reward she might offer — "to any man who will go in the building and get her. That's her room over there," she cried, pointing to one of the side windows above the trees.

The men, led by the gardener, dashed at the doorway instantly, and then as promptly recoiled as a fierce gust of fire and smoke burst out of the opening and enveloped them. They staggered back, and, after they had reached a place of comparative safety, gazed anxiously at the flame-swept house and shook their heads.

"It can't be done, ma'am," said the gardener at last; "I wouldn't dare to try it for the Chalden millions. A man'd be burned to a crisp before he got to her room. Look at that hallway, there are no stairs left."

"My God!" said the principal, "what shall we do? What has happened? She is in my charge — I'll go myself!"

She recklessly approached the blazing

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hall with some half formed purpose in her mind, when the old gardener drew her forcibly away from the building. She stood wringing her hands, her old face as white as death. The girls crowded around her.

"She was all right when we heard the alarm," cried her room-mate piteously. "I heard her say 'Run, run!' when we started. I would not have left her if anything had been ——"

At this moment a hatless young man — the inevitable young man — burst uncere-
moniously through the surrounding girls and made for the principal. He was tall and athletic, and from his dress it was evident that he had been riding.

"Is anybody in there?" he asked sharply.

"Yes! Alicia! Miss Chalden!" came in a perfect babel of screams.

"Where is she? Silence, the rest of you!"

"In that room yonder."

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"The third from the front on the second story?"

"Yes. For God's sake, save her!"

Without a word the young man started toward the building.

"Fifty thousand dollars —" screamed Miss Winthrop after him, but she had not finished the sentence before he was at the burning house.

Waving aside the men who would have stopped him, he dashed up on the porch and made for the front door. He had not yet realized the fierceness of the fire. One look through the broad old doorway into the infernal pit of flame convinced him of the absolute impossibility of entrance there. The fall of a wall inside the building suddenly threw the fire out of the entrance straight at him. He was instantly enveloped in flame and smoke.

He turned and ran blindly, with an instinctive consciousness for the proper course, which he could not explain, to the left. The house was surrounded by a long

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porch extending around three sides of it. The smoke and flame obscured him for the moment from the gaze of the people on the lawn, and before the wind cleared the porch temporarily he had vanished. They could not tell what had become of him. They thought he had entered and was lost. As he ran it occurred to him that possibly the back way was open, and instead of returning to the lawn he simply continued on around the house and was hidden from their view. The fire had not yet taken such a hold of the back of the house as of the front. Although the flames were curling out of the windows as he passed he got to the back porch without difficulty.

He made at once for the door, a heavy oak affair, which was still intact. When he put his hand on the handle he found the door was locked. There was fire in the kitchen he could see through the shuttered windows, but more smoke than anything else. He looked around for something with which to break the door, and as he

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did so he heard the sound of a fall within followed by a muffled scream. There was a heavy wooden bench on the back porch. In his excitement he picked it up as if it had been a walking-stick and hurled it violently against the door. The lock gave way and the door flew open with a crash. The black smoke poured out upon him in a sickening volume.

The room had been tightly closed, and as the air rushed through the door it seemed to break into fire everywhere. The light enabled him to see a prostrate figure in the far corner at the foot of the back stair. Filling his lungs with air, crouching low to get as near the floor as he could, and holding his breath, he made his way over the burning planks through the smoke until he reached the figure. The heap was a dazed, half fainting woman. The fire was already touching her garments. Without losing a second he gathered her up unceremoniously and started for the entrance. Instinctively she buried her face in his

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coat, and in a moment they had gained the door and were out in the open air. As he passed through the doorway her foot, hanging limp over his arm, struck against the door-post. A sharp cry of pain broke from her lips. Something seemed to restore her to full consciousness. He had no time to inquire what it was at the moment, for he dropped her on the grass — he observed that she could not stand — and began tearing the smouldering skirt from her, getting his hands well burned in the process. When that operation was finished he lifted her up again, carried her farther away from the house, and placed her once more upon the grass.

"My — thesis!" she gasped out, as he laid her down for the last time. "I went back for it — and ——"

"Where is it?" he asked abruptly.

He was a college man and he could understand her anxiety. Something in the spirit of a person who, having escaped death as it were by the skin of the teeth,

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and who was evidently suffering great anguish, from her white, drawn face, who could yet think of a thesis, appealed to him.

"Where is it?"

"I tried the front stairs," she said, "but it was too late. Then I came down the blind stairway into the kitchen. When I opened the door I fell and dropped the thesis. I have worked for two years on it."

"I'll get it," he said, turning and leaving her.

It was a foolish and foolhardy performance to which he had so simply engaged himself. Had he been older he would never have dreamed of such a thing. And, to do her justice, if she had been quite herself Alicia would never have suggested or allowed it. She could cheerfully risk her own life for such a cause, but she would not have permitted another to do so. Yet he made the endeavor, and successfully. The fire was much hotter than it had been, but it was still possible for him

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to pass over the floor, though now he knew he went at the risk of his life. It was blazing all around the spot where the roll of paper had lodged, but the precious document was still intact. He repeated his former precaution, then plunged recklessly in. This time he had no heavy woman to carry out, and it was well that he had not, for his clothes were flaming when he reached the door. He had taken no serious hurt, however, and he rolled himself on the ground instantly, which put out the fire, although the thesis got badly crushed in the process. Then he hurried to where he had left the girl lying on the grass.

"I have it!" he cried.

She made no answer, and, looking closer at her, he discovered that she had fainted. It was the first opportunity he had to more than glance at her, and the fire gave him light enough to see that she was beautiful. His gaze swept her from head to foot. One of her feet, without its shoe, was extended on the grass beneath the charred

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petticoat in an unnatural position. Another man might not have noticed anything amiss, but he was a physician; being young his professional instincts were the stronger, and he stooped down to see what injury she had sustained, for something was wrong with the shoeless foot evidently.

He was all action once more. Forgetful of the fact that his hands were blistered, that his hair was singed grotesquely, and that he was black with smoke and burned in places, he drew his penknife from his pocket, in default of other instrument, lifted the little foot, skilfully slit the girl's stocking, and laid bare her ankle. A few manipulations, which bespoke assurance and ability, apprised him what was the trouble. It was a forward dislocation of the ankle. The absence of crepitation assured him that the ankle was not broken. He glanced up from her white foot to her whiter face. She was still unconscious. If he could reduce the

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dislocation before she revived she would thank him in the end.

He seized the ankle in his strong, skilled hands, worked over it for a moment, and finally forced the bones back into place. His instincts and observations, since he had discovered the accident, had been entirely impersonal and scientific, he had handled her with the impassivity of his profession. Not until he had completed the task did he notice the beauty of the foot and ankle in his hand, and at that moment, with a cry, probably extorted from her by the pain of the reduction, the girl lifted her head, struggled a moment, raised herself upon her arm, and stared at him in bewilderment.

"Saved now," he said, smiling at her cheerfully, "and your ankle will be all right with a little nursing."

"My thesis?"

"Here it is."

"Thank you very ——"

At that juncture Miss Winthrop, at-

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tended by some of the girls, burst upon the scene. She had only at the last moment bethought her of the back of the house. She saw the kneeling figure and the recumbent one.

"Oh!" she cried. "Have you ——?"

"She is safe, madam," said the man, rising to his feet. "She had come down to the kitchen. I got in without difficulty, and we got out without much more. She had gone back for her thesis, and found her escape cut off." He discreetly said nothing about his own part in rescuing that document. "The young lady is all right, too, with the exception of a dislocation of her ankle, which she got in the kitchen, and which absolutely prevented her from moving. The pain must have been frightful. I fear I banged it against the doorpost in bringing her out. As it is, I have just taken advantage of her unconscious condition to reduce the sprain—I am a physician—and all she needs now is good bandaging and careful nursing."

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"Oh, sir," began the principal, stooping down and gathering the girl in her arms, "you have done nobly, you are ——"

"It's nothing, Miss Winthrop," said the young man, smiling through his grime and smoke and pain, "nothing at all. Any man would have done it."

"I cannot allow you to say so, sir," said the principal. "This is Miss Alicia Chalden. Her father — there will be — a — reward ——"

"To have been of service to Miss Chalden is reward enough," interrupted the young man lightly. "But I think," with an apprehensive glance toward the dormitory, "that we would better move farther from the house. The walls might come down at any moment, and if you will allow me, the young lady can hardly walk yet" — he stooped down once more and lifted the girl in his arms again. Before he did so he put her thesis in her hand. Followed by the grateful principal and

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the other girls he carried her toward the nearest dormitory.

By this time a fire company from Philadelphia, accompanied by physicians, had arrived on a special train.

"If you will carry her in there," said Miss Winthrop, pointing to the first room off the hall, "I will advise these people as to what is to be done and return in a moment."

The young man accordingly deposited his burden on a couch in the parlor and turned away. The girl caught his hand.

"You have saved my life, and my thesis: I had worked years on that," she murmured. "I shall never forget you."

"It is nothing, Miss Chalden," answered the young man, striving gently to draw away his hand.

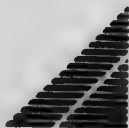
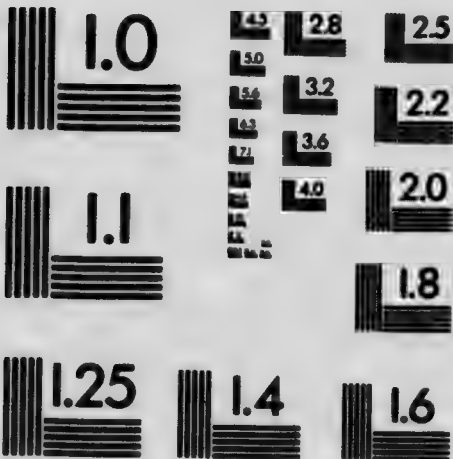
"It's everything to me," she answered. "We have looked death in the face together."

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words. His heart leaped at the sound of them, and then, before he could divine her intention, she lifted his burned and bleeding hand to her lips and kissed it. Then she sank back on the couch, exhausted by all that she had gone through. Leaving her with some of the teachers and her classmates, the young man quickly withdrew from the room and, unnoticed in the confusion, traversed the campus, climbed painfully over the fence, mounted his horse, and galloped away. He had been passing the grounds by the merest chance, when he had seen the fire, and had come to do what he could. And he had done it.

It was not until next morning that Miss Winthrop and Alicia Chalden, in talking over the gallant rescue, realized that they had not learned the name of the man who had so superbly met the emergency.

V

IN the two months that had elapsed since the burning of Hulswood Hall Doctor William Penn Whyot had managed to see Miss Alicia Chalden three or four times, each time himself unseen. He had, of course, immediately satisfied himself by thorough if concealed inquiry that she had sustained no permanent injury from her adventure.

Whyot was no drone in the world's affairs. He worked as hard at his profession as the poorest doctor ever did. Most of his patients were among the very poor, who, in accordance with the peculiar arrangement of Philadelphia, lived at his back door, within a stone's throw of the Pine Street quarter. He was a scientist and a physician because he loved his profession, and for no other reason. But whenever he could take the time for a ride

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in the country, since the fire, he had instinctively turned his horse so as to pass by the Brookford College grounds. There he had seen Alicia watching the others playing tennis, it was before the days of golf — in America at least — or he had caught fleeting glimpses of her once in a while strolling under the old trees.

He was in love with her. The one or two glimpses he had caught of her face in the firelight that night had impressed her beauty upon his consciousness as a more conventional sight could never have done. He could not explain his feeling for her, nor could he understand how it had arisen. But however it was, he had to recognize the fact. He had read of such things, and laughed — now he knew they were true. He made no struggle. Why should he? He loved her, in secret, but with an increasing, possessing, consuming passion as burning in his soul as the fire through which he had carried her. There was no attempt on his part to disguise the fact from him-

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self, although naturally he told no one else. He was alone in the world with the exception of the widowed aunt and his bachelor uncle who lived in another Pine Street house near his own. They should know in due time, meanwhile he would keep it to himself. The man — and eke the woman — who keeps his love affairs to himself is apt to prove the most successful lover.

The circumstances of his meeting with Alicia had been so strange and so romantic; as she had said, when she had kissed his hand, they had looked death in the face together, and in that glance love had been born; therefore, so he reasoned, they belonged to each other forever. The papers rang with accounts of the gallant and heroic rescue of the millionaire's daughter and her thesis, but no one discovered his name, and he kept it religiously secret. He did not wish to make himself known to her yet. He ascertained that she would graduate in the spring—he might have guessed that from the affair of the thesis—and he

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resolved to wait until then. Waiting would do no harm, he reasoned, with unusual astuteness for a lover, and he was right.

There was a fierceness of purpose, an intensity of energy about the doctor that was utterly absent from the other members of his family, which, indeed, had not been evidenced by any of them for generations. He had a touch of the temperament of his old French ancestor, and when to this resurrected strain of dashing gallantry and gayety was added the dogged determination of his German cross — well, Alicia, if she had known anything about it, might as well have surrendered without a struggle.

Alicia did not know anything about it, of course. She did not even know the name of her gallant rescuer, but nevertheless she was quite prepared to surrender when the demand was made.

The fleeting glimpses she had caught in the firelight of the doctor's face, smoked and scorched though it was, had moved her strangely. He had burst upon her in

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her direst hour, when she had commended herself to God and given up hope — people do not usually commend themselves to God until they have lost hope, by the way!

She recalled the quick, masterful way with which, without explanation or unnecessary words, he had effected her rescue. In the midst of her terror she had been conscious of the strength with which he had held her to him and carried her through that inferno until she had fainted. Even the thrill of exquisite anguish which had brought her out of her unconsciousness and discovered him at her feet, was sweet in her memory. She would willingly suffer to see him there once more. Yet in the privacy of her chamber, when her heart lingered upon the picture, the blood rushed to her face like another flame as she thought of the man at her bare foot. She could not at all regard him in the light of a physician. It was in Alicia's mind a lover who was there — and Alicia was right.

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A benefit conferred oftentimes means a friendship shattered, but there are rare natures which it binds with the grappling hooks of gifts remembered. Alicia's was one of these. One might not have said that she loved the doctor. Men yield first to, and acknowledge most freely, the passion. Women are passive, less daring, until the acknowledgment is made, then they more often become the bolder sex. Yet at a touch Alicia was ready to yield—and she did not even know the name of the man!

Such inquiries as they could make Miss Winthrop had caused to be put in circulation, but no one could tell anything. Her rescuer, Alicia learned from her college-mates, had appeared as suddenly as if he had dropped from the clouds. He had done his work promptly and successfully, and then had vanished, taking her kiss upon his hand away with him. Had it not been for the burning building, the long, tedious days of recovery from her dislo-

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cated ankle, the crumpled thesis — which, to her joy, she found practically intact — she might have believed it all a dream.

Alicia was vastly provoked at her inability to find out anything about the man. Even her powerful father, who had set in motion all the resources at his command — and that practically amounted to everything in Philadelphia of value — was unable to discover anything. And her ignorance of the man made him the more interesting to her. It is the unknown that we fear, but it is also the unknown that appeals. In ignorance of his character or characteristics, she made a hero of him. Perhaps that ignorance is necessary to the making of heroes — in the present. She endowed him with every grace and every virtue, and then she loved the ideal she had created — the usual way.

Philip Chalden had offered to proclaim a vast reward in the hope of bringing the unknown man to light, but Alicia, with clearer insight, had refused to allow it.

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There are services rendered — by some people, that is — which cannot be paid with money. Alicia divined that this man was such an one. She could not have loved him otherwise. He would not have been her hero then. Money would be nothing to such an one as he. She stood ready — though she did not admit it — to say yes to any other demand for reward he might make, even to giving him herself. Ah, Doctor Whyot was a wise man indeed — and a fortunate as well.

Alicia longed for a sight of her rescuer once more, but she did not despair of seeing him, and soon. She was young, just turned twenty-one, when the accident occurred, and she had abundant hope. She was firmly convinced that Heaven had arranged the first meeting — in spite of the fact that a building had to be burned down to bring it about, which was illogical but feminine — and she was equally assured that in a short time in some other way another meeting would occur — even

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if another building had to be burned down! So she allowed the image of the man, or perhaps it would be more truthful to say her ideal of him, constantly to grow greater in her heart, and she waited for him with such patience as she could muster.

Possibly Alicia would have been more unhappy in her ignorance had it not been that she had a mission in her life. A mission is often a salvation in an emergency or crisis. That mission was the amelioration of the condition of the negro. She knew nothing practically about the negro. Her earliest memories were of an ancient Italian town where she believed she had been born. It had been only fifteen years since her father had returned to America, bringing her with him, and all that time she had been at school, first in the preparatory department auxiliary to Brookford College, then in the college itself. But if her practical acquaintance with the subject was nothing, her theoretical knowledge was great. Reality and theory are usually in

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inverse ratio to each other, especially in sociological discussions.

The college, on account of the deservedly high reputation of its principal, and because of the excellence of its faculty, had a very high standing among similar institutions, and many people there were from New England who matriculated thereat. Alicia had fallen under the influence of some of the most advanced thinkers upon the subject as represented in New England, Miss Winthrop herself being from an ancient Boston family. The tendency of that section at that time — and Miss Winthrop adequately represented it — was not only to consider the negro as a man and a brother, but almost as a man and a superior, although temporarily in reduced circumstances and humble condition. If the actualities of the negro were nothing, his possibilities were everything. Alicia's idea of ameliorating the condition of the negro was, first of all, to convince him of his absolute and inherent equality with

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the dominant race from every point of view.

She literally threw her splendid personality into hard study of the problem from books and theorists. There was not a negro within ten miles of Brookford College upon whom she could experiment, but the literature on the subject, which was at that time mainly written by New England people, was at her command. She determined to devote all she could command of her father's fortune, which she vaguely realized was a vast one, to the forcing of the social, intellectual, moral, spiritual, legal — and every other kind of adjectival — recognition of the negro by everybody who did not think as she. That her father might have something to say upon that subject, that he might have an opinion of his own, had never occurred to her.

Alicia was as enthusiastic as she was ignorant, as visionary as she was beautiful, and as determined as she was impractical

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— a dangerous combination of faults, virtues, power, she. Hers was an unusual mission, but then Alicia was an unusual girl in many respects. She had wondered how the unknown man who had suddenly swept her to his heart, and into his heart perhaps, and had become an integral part of her future dreams, might regard such an idea. Well, he should never be anything to her — he had got that far in her affections, you see — if he were not willing to co-operate in every way in her design.

Alicia was the first student in her class. And she sacrificed no womanly grace or charm in reaching that position. She was a sort of "Admirable Crichton" among the femininity of Brookford. Consequently, at her graduation, she was allotted the closing essay and valedictory. The thesis upon which she had won her doctorate in philosophy, which was to be conferred at the commencement exercises, was upon the integral equality of the black and

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white races — of all sorts and colors of men, in fact. Doctor Whyot, on account of his family connection with the college, had always received invitations to the graduating exercises, which he had never before attended. He had counted upon the invitation during the two months that intervened between the momentous day and the night of the fire, and this time, to the great surprise of the principal, he promptly accepted. He would see Alicia again face to face and make himself known. What would the result be?

When he came into the great hall of the college he paid his respects to Miss Winthrop, as in duty bound, and was greeted with flattering *empressement* by that worthy lady, who naturally failed to recognize the scorched and somewhat blackened mysterious adventurer of the burning building in the handsome, distinguished, well-dressed young man before her. The same feeling which had kept Whyot from making himself known to Alicia induced him to take

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a seat far back in the audience. He listened in a perfunctory manner to the profound and subtle efforts of the young enthusiasts who grappled with subjects that had engaged the minds of wise men and women for centuries — and settled them out of hand. He heard, with a smile of amusement, possible Utopias outlined and Orphic mysteries revealed by some feminine voice coming to him from billows of lace and *parterres* of tulle. He longed the while for the time when he should hear Alicia attempt the solution of the greatest problem that presses upon the American people — her subject he read on the programme — the problem that began when the *Jesus*, a Dutch man-of-war of ill-sorted name, brought twenty “negars” into Jamestown in 1620, and which grows greater with every passing decade in the history of the Republic — What to do with the negro! Not that he should care much for Alicia’s opinion, he thought, but merely that he might hear her voice again.

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The negroes, to whom a large portion of his skill and knowledge was devoted, were very fond of Doctor Whyot. He did his duty by them impartially, treated them just as he did the other poor patients who clamored at his door, but he did it under mental duress. He disliked the negro on every account, but so stern was his idea of duty that, in his endeavor not to discriminate against them, probably he overstepped the mark upon the other side, and showed them more favor and kindness than they otherwise would have received — therefore they loved him. Among the whole race, as he had come in contact with it, there was but one whom he really respected, and that was a certain man who had been a class-mate of his at Harvard.

When he had first noticed Alicia's subject upon the programme, he had been conscious of a faint feeling of disgust, not with her, but with the subject — and that she should have wasted herself upon so hopeless a problem. The disgust vanished

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the minute Alicia stepped on the platform.

Heavens! He had never dreamed of beauty like that. The clear, passionate paleness of her face, the gray brilliancy of her eyes, the scarlet fulness of her lips, the mass of blue-black hair above her broad brow, were the only details that he could discern from his distant point of view, but the poise of her head, her carriage, the grace with which she stepped forward, the dignity in her way and manner, all impressed him profoundly.

He was conscious of birth and breeding. The outward signs, the evidences of aristocracy and long descent, upon which those who possess them love to dwell—and at which those who do not, love to mock—were all there. The slender hand that held the thesis, the curve and sweep of her figure, and the foot advanced beneath her skirt—ah, that was scarcely discernible from where he sat, but the remembrance of it was hidden in his heart.

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Her voice, low and somewhat languid, as befitted her southern and semi-oriental appearance, nevertheless penetrated to the extreme end of the hall. His heart would have heard it and beat at the sound of it, though it had been earth in its earthy bed, he thought. He watched the parted lips as one fascinated, the lips that had pressed his hand. He looked down upon that brown and hardy member, and involuntarily started to raise it to his own lips. Of what the girl was saying he was hardly conscious. She could say what she pleased, he did not care. She might do what she pleased, it made no difference to him. He had known that he loved her as he had galloped up the avenue and gazed at her under the trees, but now he realized it with a different force, it was a revelation. Why had he waited so long? He had been a fool!

And suddenly, like an electric flash, the girl's eyes fastened themselves upon him. She saw, she recognized, she conquered, she was conquered. A slow color flooded

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her face. For a moment she hesitated, faltered, and then recovering herself she went on. In that great assemblage, after that, she saw only this man. She spoke only to him. She was dealing with a thing dearest to her mind and pleading with the person nearest to her heart. She instinctively realized, with the first flash of recognition between them, that he, if he thought about it at all, would be unfriendly to her position; and she set herself, with the enthusiasm of that love which craves unity and harmony — reciprocation — to reach its highest development, to convince him, to make him think as she.

All that she had studied and read for three years, all that she had written and rewritten, it flashed into her mind, had been to enable her to convince this one man. She forgot the negro as she pleaded for the allegiance of this man; and she received it. Such pleading would have moved a stone. With an eloquence foreign to woman, which was enhanced by the

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very unusualness of her subject, and by her beauty and charm, she moved him to acquiescence, and she also carried the rest of the audience with her. It was a reflex reaction caused by the earnest and powerful appeal to the man she loved, and who loved her.

The hall rang with applause as she finished. Men and women stood up and clapped and clapped again and again — a most unusual proceeding for Philadelphia, which may be accounted for by the fact that Brookford College gathered its students and its audience from all parts of the country. It was such a triumph as few young women have ever achieved. Miss Winthrop, in her long connection with the college, could remember nothing like it. The happy principal's voice trembled with emotion as she bestowed upon the happier girl — for she had convinced the one whose opinion she valued! — the coveted degree of Doctor of Philosophy *summa cum laude!*

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Philip Chalden had never cared much for his daughter before. He had done a father's duty by her, he had provided her with everything she could wish for, he had seen that she lacked nothing, that she was well cared for, and then he had mainly left her to others; but that night, as he sat back in the far corner of the room, he thrilled with pride. He was a loveless, lonely old man. Alicia and himself constituted his family. Now the girl was a success. She knew something. Hard-hearted, practical as he was, with centuries of inherited prejudice from his Southern forebears in opposition to her views, she did not convince him for a single moment; he could have torn her arguments to tatters, but she had spoken with such grace and charm and spirit; she had made such a good thing out of an impossible proposition; she had proved such a good advocate in a desperate situation — desperate from his standpoint — and she was so convinced herself that her position was unassailable, her logic

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unquestionable, her conclusions absolute, that the old man, who liked confidence, and success, and who worshipped ability as his god, felt strangely drawn toward her. If she could thus advocate an absurd and erroneous view, what might she not do with truth! And yet the strangeness of her subject came home to him as to no one else who heard her. That subject — and he smiled in mockery as he remembered.

So two men in that great audience looked upon the girl that night with eyes of affection — a lover and a father. It was she herself who brought them together. Compelled by an irresistible desire Whyot had gone toward her after the exercises were over. He had waited on the outskirts of the throng buzzing around her with praise and congratulations, until she disposed of them all, and turned eagerly to him. It seemed ages to her before she could devote to him a moment's attention. A little eddy in the passing crowd

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left them alone for the moment, and others approaching, seeing the intentness of her greeting, stepped aside.

"Miss Chalden," he began as she extended her hand, both hands, to him, "it was magnificent!"

"I am so glad you have come back to me," she said softly, forgetful of everything else. "I can thank you now."

"Don't! It was a happiness to serve you—" he bent such a glance upon her that brought the color to her pale face. "I would lay down my life for you," he added simply.

In the meeting of a great passion conventionalities are swept away. The love in his heart spoke in his voice, flamed in his eyes. They had looked death in the face together, they both remembered again. And the woman, in the midst of that crowded hall, heard his voice, divined his love, and returned it. The long lashes he marked curving so gracefully swept her cheek for a moment, then she lifted her

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eyes, and looked upon him bravely, her soul in her swimming glance.

"I know," she whispered breathlessly, "I know."

And thus the compact was sealed, never to be broken. So they thought.

"I do not know your name," she said at last, smiling faintly up at him; tall as she was, he towered above her.

It was only a detail now, she knew the man, nothing else mattered.

"Whyot," he answered; "William Penn Whyot."

"Father," she said, suddenly turning to the older man, who had at last come toward her.

"Alicia," said Chalden, "I am proud of you. It was all wrong, but it was splendid."

That was more praise than she had ever received from the silent man. His sincerity spoke in his look and voice.

"Father," she continued, smiling with pleasure and turning again, "this is Doc-

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tor Whyot. He carried me out of the dormitory the night of the fire. I have found him at last."

"Sir," said the older man, grasping the hand of the younger, with more feeling than he had shown for years, "you have laid me under an inestimable obligation. I never realized it until to-night. How can I requite you?"

"Sir, there is a way," said Doctor Whyot, looking the other boldly in the face, with a courage and directness which matched his own.

"Here," thought Philip Chalden, realizing his meaning, "is a young man who is not afraid."

There were few people who could look Philip Chalden in the face without blenching. He felt the same stimulus and pleasure when a man looked at him in that way that a fencer feels when the first thrust and parry tells him that his blade is crossed by one worthy of all his skill and courage.

As for Alicia Chalden, she trembled

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with delicious pleasure as she heard her lover's answer. It could mean but one thing. And then, before they could say anything further, the crowd swept them apart, and the romance of their lives was begun.

Was it to be a meeting only to be swept apart in the end?

VI

THE Major's interview with the millionaire had about decided the question in Chalden's mind, and the day after he gave his final consent to an engagement between Alicia and her lover. There were reasons why the marriage between Alicia and Doctor Whyot appeared especially desirable to Philip Chalden. No definite date was set for the wedding, however, although it was tacitly understood that it should take place late in the approaching fall. Chalden had stipulated that there should be no undue precipitation in the affair — he wished to assure himself of the genuineness of his daughter's feelings for one thing — and the doctor acquiesced in the delay more willingly in the hope that time might enable him to propitiate his wrathful little uncle.

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Alicia, who went little into society — there would be time enough for that after her marriage — was happy in her freedom from even the gentle tutelage of Brookford, and in her new love and lover. She was quite content to wait until the autumn. So the arrangement pleased everybody, even the Major, who hoped against hope that the delay might help him. The Major had altered his will, but had not yet cut the acquaintance of his nephew. It would not do to crush him altogether at once. A sort of armed truce subsisted between them.

Although Chalden offered his prospective son-in-law various positions of trust and responsibility in one or another of his vast undertakings, the doctor preferred to follow his profession, for the time at least, and he sturdily continued his practice, seeing Alicia, now that she had taken up her abode at the North Broad Street house, much more frequently than when she had been at Brookford. There was a streak

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of her father's business capacity and tenacity of purpose in Alicia, and all the moments not occupied with her lover she devoted to the negro.

There lived in Philadelphia at the time a clergyman named Henry Olney. He was the rector of the Episcopal Church of the Cyrenian. There were several churches for colored people in the city, and this was the humblest of them all. It was located in the midst of that locality where the great mass of the poorer negroes were compelled — literally by the pressure upon them of Jews and Gentiles — to live. It was a mission which was carried on by the white people and was under the control of the great Episcopal Church of the diocese.

As if to compensate the church for its lowly condition and the wretched character of its people, its priest was by far the ablest of those who ministered to the colored people in the city of Philadelphia. Indeed, on the score of character, ability, and educa-

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tion, he could stand among the best of the clergy of the city without regard to any conditions. After a course in Arts and Letters, in which he had taken highest honors at Harvard, he had prepared for the ministry at the General Theological Seminary in New York. His work at the Cyrenian Church had been successful to a marked degree, considering the conditions under which he labored, and he had the respect of all the right thinking portion of the community.

Still he was not a happy man. He was perhaps the loneliest man in the city of Philadelphia, for the Reverend Henry Olney was, technically speaking, a negro. That is, he had one-sixteenth of negro blood in him. In person, in manners, in habits of life, and thought, he was practically a white man. The most rigorous scrutiny failed to discover the slightest evidence that he was a man of color. If he had lived where his ancestry was unknown, and if he had so desired, he could have

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passed for a white man without question. His association, especially at college, where his character and ability had made him much liked, had always been with white people. He was unmarried and had no relatives that he could recall. He had worked his way through college and owed no man anything. In every sense of the word he was a gentleman; in thought as well as in action, in looks as well as in education, yet he stood before the world as a black man.

However hard his lot, however lonely his situation, there was not the slightest intention on his part of denying it. It was bitter injustice, of course, that that one small infiltration of black blood should dominate the more virile stock from which he sprang, should cut him off from that dominant race which contributed fifteen-sixteenths to his physical, and sixteen-sixteenths to his mental and spiritual entity, yet such was the case. Inexorable custom, more rigid than the ancient Median law,

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had passed its decree. He took up his cross, a heavier cross perhaps than that the Cyrenian — was he, too, a black man? — had carried after our Saviour, and followed after his Master uncomplainingly.

There was a great meeting in the Academy of Music under the auspices of the Colored League, an Episcopal Church organization for the advancement of the condition of the negro, a few nights after the engagement between Alicia and Whyot, which was to be addressed by the most eminent member of the colored race in America, the famous principal of the Taladega Institute; by the manager of one of the great railroad systems of the country, who was deeply concerned in the problem; by the head of one of the largest merchandising concerns in America, where, by the way, no negroes of whatever character or ability could secure employment, save in some menial capacity; and by the Reverend Henry Olney.

Alicia was there of course, so was Why-

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ot. Where Alicia was there was he also. He was trying his best to see things from her point of view, and with fair success. It is easy to see things from the viewpoint of the woman with whom you are in love, especially if that woman happens to be as beautiful as you think she is, and you are as wise as she thinks you. Deep down in Whyot's heart was the old repugnance to the negro against which he had always fought. The friendship between him and Olney, for he was the class-mate to whom reference has been made, was genuine and sincere. Yet he never would have dreamed of inviting him to dinner as he would others of his college-mates. The clergyman had conquered the other man's liking, but Whyot argued with himself that the man was practically white in any event. In that fate had allotted him the most unfortunate social position to occupy that she had to dispense, the young physician deeply pitied his unfortunate friend.

The meeting was an entire success,

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that is, if a great congregation, brilliant speeches, beautiful music, and fervid prayers are the elements that go to make up a success. There were other things of course, there would be results of some sort possibly, but time only would show whether anything permanent would be gained. *Vox et præterea nihil* was the usual result of missionary or other public meetings of this kind in the Academy of Music. Every once in a while the reformers engaged it, assembled a crowd, which called itself a town meeting, hurled defiance at Chalden and his henchmen, passed resolutions, appointed committees, and with vast enthusiasm — adjourned. Nobody minded. The people went away and forgot. The mountain labored and brought forth nothing, "not even a mouse!"

As a rule the speeches that evening were all good, if not exactly palatable. The eminent educator, whose remarks were felicitous to a wonderful degree, opened the meeting by telling a story of a certain visit

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he had paid to the humble home of one of his people in the far South. Coffee was duly prepared, and when it was served his black hostess asked his companion whether he would like "hard sweetenin' er saft." Unfamiliar with the terminology, the companion chose "saft sweetenin'," whereupon the ancient dame stuck her black finger into the molasses jug, twisted up a large mass of the sticky compound, and with her other hand scraped it off into the coffee-cup! With this experience before him the distinguished educator selected the alternative. He asked for "hard sweetenin'," at that the old woman bit off a huge piece from a large lump of brown sugar and deposited it in his cup! The moral of the story, the application of it, was that whatever the audience got that night was bound to be disagreeable to somebody. After that he went on with his speech.

The propositions he advocated and the conclusions at which he arrived might be disagreeable to a majority of the congre-

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gation, but there was no question as to their sympathy with the manner and method of the speaker. Such apposite illustrations, such humorous comparisons, such ingenious arguments, such shrewd applications, and such exceedingly good stories, had rarely been heard by such an assemblage. The man won his auditors completely in the end, and it was easy to see that his success was the result, not of a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, but of native ability of a rare and unusual character. Due to his white blood — fairly or unfairly urged his critics.

The two white men followed him — at some distance, be it said. They were both good, forceful speakers, but they lacked the forensic capacity, the oratorical brilliancy, and the native shrewdness and wit of the other man. The theme of each man was the regeneration of the negro by practical education, with a great insistence upon manual training. The social question was touched on but lightly, and the

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two white men did not even mention it. The first speaker, and he was in face and voice and manner unmistakably of the negro type, for all his white blood, had said, incidentally, that when the negro had proved himself worthy, social recognition would follow. Meanwhile the question was academic and not under discussion.

As it was academic, the unthinking portion of the audience did not pay much attention to the remark, although here and there one keener than the rest noticed the statement and resented it, for, talk as they might, there existed in that audience, as there would exist in any other body of white people in almost any section of our country, an inextinguishable, ineradicable consciousness of domination. They never would, under any circumstances, or at any time, be willing to extend social recognition to the negro. To break down that prejudice would be real national suicide, as to maintain it is to preserve the purity of

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the race. With a complete realization of that prejudice—for he was white enough, singular contradiction! to feel it—the Reverend Henry Olney rose to close the meeting.

Without hesitation or circumlocution he announced, what to many in that great audience must have been news, his connection with the black race. Indeed, to those who did not know him such an announcement was necessary. As he stood there in the conventional black of the clergy, his pale, intellectual face flushed with the consciousness of the position he occupied, he pleaded for the uplifting of the great black mass which is down below; the ignorant, half-civilized people which has been brought in contact in an instant, as it were, with a civilization acquired through centuries of difficulties; the dull, unreceptive, superstitious slave-holden negro, so fondly and fatuously dowered with the highest gift of modern citizenship in a day; and expected to learn the use in an hour of the things

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which it had taken the most brilliant race the sun ever shone upon centuries to master. And he appealed for help for this great, constantly growing, submerged body of ignorance, incompetency, and degradation, the lowest class of the most pitiable people on the face of the globe.

Unconsciously, without premeditation — indeed, he had intended to avoid any such reference — he enlarged his plea. Gradually his thoughts changed, he rose above the dark strata, and stood forth the representative of another class, a higher, of which he was by no means a single instance, the men of mixed blood! — the people who were in varying degrees practically white. He painted the helplessness and hopelessness of their condition with such fervor and force and eloquence as fairly swept the audience off its feet. They forgot that he was a negro. They forgot that to admit the claim of one man, of whatever the degree of black blood, was to admit the claim of all. The hearts of

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the people went out to him, and when the offering for the work was taken up they showed that where their hearts were there went their treasure also.

The man sat down after a terrible arraignment of society for its arbitrary and unreasoning barriers, after an awful contrast between the dictates of humanity and the plans of God.

"Rich and poor," he cried at last, his voice ringing the ancient phrases through that great hall, "the black and the white, the brown and the red, the Lord, He is the maker of them all. There shall be a country where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all."

So, with such burning, fiery eloquence, might Paul himself have spoken.

And that was the first time Alicia saw the Reverend Henry Olney. As they stood on the steps of the North Broad Street house that night Doctor Whyot and Alicia

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discussed, as they had ever since the meeting, the wonderful speech with which Olney had closed it.

"Don't you pity the negro?" asked Alicia. "Don't you realize the truth of all that Mr. Olney has said? Oh, Will, I don't know why you cannot see as I do! They are human beings, they have souls, God made them. Why should we object to them merely because of the accident of color? Because their skins are darker than ours? What has the color of a man's skin to do with the color of his soul? Aren't all souls white in the sight of God? How dare we discriminate?"

"I don't know why, but we do discriminate," answered Whyot stubbornly; "you do yourself, Alicia."

"I do not."

"Yes, you do, and it is easy to prove it."

"How?"

"Would you marry a black man, Alicia?"

"Of course not!" with a little sudden

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movement of repulsion she sought vainly to conceal.

"There you are! How would it be possible to extend social recognition without marriage? That is the supreme and final test of social equality, intermarriage, the other things amount to nothing."

"But I would not marry an Indian, or any but a member of my own race."

"Certainly not, but it's different with the negro; I feel it, you feel it. Are you not conscious that our race is the dominant one?"

"Yes, it has become so; but what it has become the black race may."

"Never!" said Whyot firmly. "I feel sorry for them, of course. I want to help them, and I want to help you; but frankly, I cannot forget the conclusion forced upon me as to the essential superiority of the white race. Why, you yourself argue it to me by merely being in existence. Whatever may have been the Divine plan originally, at least they have become an in-

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ferior race. Their development has been arrested. I speak from a scientific standpoint. Perhaps one of the primeval septs was turned aside, climatic or other conditions laid a hand upon its descendants, and said, 'thus far and no farther.' "

"But look at the men of talent among the colored people."

"You can count them upon your fingers," answered Doctor Whyot; "and those who have discovered any special aptitude at all have the white man's blood in them. That Talladega superintendent, for instance, and as for the man who outshone them all, Olney, and he is a man," added the doctor, "he is practically entirely white. Him, now, I profoundly pity. Why should one-sixteenth of black blood utterly eliminate him from the race to which he legitimately belongs? It is rank injustice, but the fact exists. He is the loneliest of white men. In spite of himself, the man looks down upon the negro; in spite of themselves, the white people look down upon

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him. He can look forward to nothing but a life of service. He is a slave to that one-sixteenth of black blood. It is an eternal fetter laid upon him, and he is one of the best, the noblest fellows that ever lived, a gentleman, and I am proud to consider him my friend. Yes, I pity him with all my heart."

"Yes," said Alicia, "his is the saddest case. And how can we help him?"

"Sad," returned her lover, "it is ghastly. And I see no way to help him; but if you find any way I'll loyally help you, dear."

"I'll find a way to help him, and all of them, please God, Will," responded the girl, confidently.

"Perhaps you may; I hope so. Do you know what I thought as I watched those four men and heard them to-night?"

"What was it?"

"Well, I will admit, that on the score of intelligence, the two black men, counting Olney as one of course, outmatched

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the white men, and I will admit the two white men tried to eliminate from their discussions — and succeeded — anything which in the slightest degree savored of superiority, and I will admit, further, that the two black men strove to eliminate — and did — from their speeches anything which savored of subordination, and yet as I watched them I was conscious that there were two men from the dominant race talking down to the proposition, and two men from a subordinate race talking up. In spite of themselves that is what they did, their separate and divergent mental attitudes indicated it plainly. It all came to me as it came — if people will honestly admit it — to everyone in that room."

"Yes," admitted Alicia reluctantly, "you are right."

"Did it come to you?"

"Yes — it did," she answered, troubled, but honest, "in spite of my reason, my heart, everything, I must admit I felt it. That is my weakness, my wickedness;

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I ought not to feel that way. I know that it is wrong. Yet we seem the master race. Ah, Will, and you are the master of the master race, too."

He bent down toward her.

"But you will help me, won't you? I will, I must, try to solve this problem. There is a way, I want to find it. You will help me?"

"I will," he answered, "in everything, with all my soul."

"God bless you, and good-night."

Alicia's lips melted upon his own, and she was gone.

There was that in her kisses which never satisfied. Each one was an inspiration. She never made herself cheap to her lover. There was always something in reserve. Whyot stood in the still night trembling from the brief yet burning touch. The girl was an angel and a saint. She was at the same time passionate and holy. She appealed to every side of him.

In one of the many discussions they had

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had he had told her what a woman ought to be to a man.

"A man," he had said, "is many sided, if he be worth anything in the world. He has a sensuous side, an intellectual side, a moral side, a working side, a playful side. The woman who is to fill the measure of his heart must content him in his every mood. She must appeal to his senses by her beauty; she must appeal to his mind by her intellect; she must appeal to his moral aspirations by her spirituality, and when he wants to work or to play, she must be ready. You content me, Alicia. May I speak with due delicacy, and say that there is nothing here," laying his hand upon his breast, "no desire, no dream, no aspiration, which I do not find realized in you."

"It is not so with me, Will," she had answered, smiling up at him from where she sat on a footstool by his knee.

"Not so with you, darling?" he cried, with a fierce pang at his heart at the thought that he failed to satisfy her.

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"I know a better way than that," she had whispered softly; "I don't want you quite to content me; to me love that is satisfied begins to die. I do not wish you to realize my ideal of you exactly, absolutely, completely. I do not wish to feel that your revelation of yourself is terminated, that I have nothing to learn, or to discover, since I know it all. Dear, I want to feel, as I look at you, that there is something more, that I do not quite master it all; that there is something still to be sought for, something that I may have the pleasure of finding. You almost content me; I do not want you to do it quite."

Ah, indeed was Alicia a Doctor of the philosophy of love — and that is life!

"My dear," Whyot had whispered, after a little thoughtful silence, "yours is the higher, the nobler, the better way."

"Yes," she answered, nestling closer to him. "Be a little but not too discontented with me for what I have said. Let me always be near, very near to the full measure."

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She had risen as she had spoken, and he had stooped toward her and swept her to his breast.

"Near my heart forever," he had cried, and with that, as this night, she had kissed him and had gone.

He thought of that conversation there with her good-night kiss upon his lips as he dismissed the *coupé* and walked down the long, lonely, brightly lighted streets toward his home.

There was a mystery about the girl, an elusiveness. He never quite fathomed her. As he progressed further and further in her affection, in her confidence, in her being, there was always a brighter vista opened before him. Ah, yes, to be a little discontented, in the sense in which she used it, that was best, in love and in life. Alicia was right. She was always right—dear Doctor of Philosophy.

Why hadn't she given him two kisses that night instead of one?

VII

THE great result of the meeting at the Academy of Music, from Olney's point of view, was that he had succeeded in giving a practical direction to Alicia Chalden's enthusiasm. He had an opportunity to supplement her theory by his knowledge, and she soon became the principal source of assistance for Olney's mission work. Chalden, who had no use for the negro in any other capacity than that of a servant — as a "nigger" he would have phrased it — watched her endeavors with some amusement, mixed with not a little contempt.

He had means enough to enable her to indulge her whim, her fad, so he characterized it, to her heart's content. Alicia, ignorant of the world, with but a vague idea of money or its value, and with no conception of the vastness of her father's

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financial resources, made no heavy demands upon his treasury. The sums that seemed so large to her were trifling to him. He never missed them, and if he had would still have given her unlimited range gladly.

Olney was keen enough to see how the land lay, but he was too honorable a man to take advantage of her inexperience, and beside that, he was in love with her. In love with her with a full realization of the entire hopelessness of his position. In love with her, with an iron determination never by word, look, or gesture to betray his passion to her or to anyone.

His manner toward her was perfect. In no way did he give her the slightest tangible clew to the feelings with which he regarded her; yet, without being positively aware of it, without stating the fact baldly to herself, Alicia had some instinctive intuitive feminine perception of the way in which Olney regarded her. She felt it in some degree at least. If she had had any

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actual evidence to go upon, doubtless there would have been an instant repulsion, but the whole affair was so subtle that she felt nothing but pity for the man.

He never presumed socially upon her generous enthusiasm for his race. He came often to the North Broad Street house, but always upon legitimate business with meet subjects for her deliberation. When he finished his business he went away. Indeed, in the shadow of his visit lay his safeguard. He could only control himself for a limited time, the strain was too great. Some day he felt the tension would be too much for him. Then, God help him, he would break. Meantime, he would not see her except it were necessary. He ought not to have seen her at all after he recognized his feeling for her, but then there was the mission, and what she could do for it. His duty, and his desire, ran parallel — a rare occurrence, for these things nearly always cross at right angles.

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Alicia had dragged Whyot to the mission in her train. The college acquaintance between the two men had been resumed, and the doctor lent what assistance — mainly medical — he could to the other man's work. He had not the slightest suspicion of the feeling Olney entertained for Alicia. The suggestion of such a thing would have seemed to him preposterous — as indeed it was — an insult — which it certainly was not. In fact no one suspected it except the girl, and her consciousness was not sufficiently acute for her to feel affronted — not yet. The happiness and satisfaction she took in her own love affair, the completeness of her self-surrender to her lover, and the entirety of his devotion to her, moved her the more to a tender pity for the poor clergyman and his hopeless passion.

As for Olney, he raged against the situation in which he found himself involved. Practically as well born, in one sense, as Whyot, though out of wedlock, for the

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white blood in him came from a mixture of some of the best strains of the oldest and most aristocratic portion of Virginia; as bright a student, as well educated a man as the doctor, with a mind keener and more subtle, with manners even more polished, for greater necessity for circumspection existed in his case than was required of one whose position in society was so assured; with a profession which was second to none in dignity, honor, and unselfishness; and with a consciousness of ability to achieve, he could not see why that little infiltration of black blood should remove him so entirely from the possibility of seeking the desire of his heart.

Why, in God's name, wasn't he as capable, as fit a husband for Alicia Chalden as any other man on earth? No man was fit for her of course. That admission was an evidence of the genuineness of his passion, but at least there was no real reason save that damned streak, with its inevitable implication of oft repeated illegitimacy

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back in the line, which differentiated him from the rest of the world. God! if he had only been a black man, he would have gloried in his color. But to be neither one nor the other, to be set far above the black man on the one hand, and far below the white man on the other; to have all the ambitions, aspirations, desires, and capacities of the white man, and yet to be denied all participation or fellowship with him, and to be forced to turn for all that makes life dear to the black race, or to another, if he could find one, in a situation like unto his own, and thus unite two discontents into a mighty river of despair—it was impossible!

The faith, the belief, the religion of the Reverend Henry Olney trembled in the passionate vortices in which his soul was caught and tossed. He prayed, he agonized, he threw himself with redoubled energy into his work. He forced himself to see the girl with the outward calmness, the indifference of a stranger. He steeled

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his heart against the influence she exerted, he mocked and despised himself for giving way to a passion in which in his secret hours he gloried — and in vain. He succeeded in but one thing. He loved the girl with the tropic intensity of the South, yet amid the inward conflict he gave no outward sign. Not even Philip Chalden, with his keen vision, could have detected it. Only Alicia had that dim idea of it which she pityingly put out of sight.

There lived in Chalden's household an old black woman, who had been Philip Chalden's nurse and in turn Alicia's. Aunt Nancy was a member of Olney's congregation. She had grown to love the young man as if he had been her own son, and he, respecting her sterling integrity, her shrewd common sense and kindness of heart, repaid her with kindly and affectionate consideration. She was almost bed-ridden now, and he came often to see her. Time was when Philip Chalden had stood

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highest in her heart, but the cares of the world in which he lived had gradually engrossed the man. He had lost the finer feelings, and though he still treated his old "mammy" with careless kindness and indulged her every material wish, he came less and less often to see her. She simply drifted out of his life.

There is a weak spot in every man's armor, one point at least in which the otherwise invulnerable may be fatally stricken; and the secret of success for the enemy is to find the point. It was a petty stab in the heel that laid mighty Achilles low.

This woman knew all about Chalden's mysterious past, of course; but when he thought about it at all he remembered that she had known it all the time and she had never spoken of it. She would never speak of it. His was the confidence of custom, begot by the habit of old assurance. He had cautioned her enough at first, but of late years the subject had not even been mentioned between them.

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If he had considered it, it is probable, nay, certain, that he would have reasoned that self-interest, if no other motive were potent, would keep her silent. What! If loyalty were gone, would she venture to strike at the hand that fed her, clothed her, sheltered her? Would she open her lips when to tell meant her beggary, the street in her old age, severance from Alicia—from him? So confident was he that the shadow of a doubt of her fidelity never entered his mind. Yet had he but thought of it with the unbiassed clearness with which he was accustomed to consider eventualities, he might have realized that there would come a moment when his material power, at least, would be unavailing, and that if no other force existed to restrain her, the situation, for him, would be precarious in the extreme. That would be the moment when, not of choice but of necessity, she would be compelled to exchange the comforts of her present home for a narrower and more lasting abode. What,

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if just as she trembled on that eternal verge, she should speak?

Chalden had done with women long since. Like men of his calibre, he despised them unless they were bad enough to be useful to him, and he forgot that the most potent force to undermine loyalty and kill devotion is neglect. One cannot even scorn a black woman with impunity, and to a loving heart, especially a woman's, worse even than scorn is indifference.

The old mammy had loved him when he was a child and when he was a man. She had been loyal and helpful to him in all his troubles, and had taken pride in her assistance to her master. In her old black breast she had buried secrets, the mere possession of which might have killed a less sturdy woman. She had been faithful to him through years, but now a change had come over the spirit of her dreams. She had been left alone too much.

We have it from the Highest Authority that it is not good for man to be alone, and

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it may not be gainsaid that solitude is even worse for a woman, especially a woman of Aunt Nancy's class, to whom attention, be it only that we might bestow upon a dog, is as the breath of life. Chalden's own action had wrought a miracle. He had shaken the fidelity of an ancient slave. Into the place which his own withdrawal had left vacant had crept the personality of another man; the more easily, because, like many full-blooded negroes, Aunt Nancy was proud to claim the brilliant Olney as one of her own unfortunate race.

The ground was undermined beneath Philip Chalden's feet by his own actions. There was brewing for him a petard which, in the end, was to hoist the engineer. Jealousy, the bitter pangs of old relationship slowly sundered, of benefits forgot — benefits that she had conferred upon him — filled that old storm-torn heart. Slowly these had swept out the image of Chalden and that of Olney had entered in.

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It is true that Alicia had her place in the woman's heart, too; but it was never the place that Chalden had held, nor was it that which Olney began to occupy. Alicia had been separated from her old nurse for so many years that she had grown somewhat apart from her. Without in the least intending it, for she had too gentle a heart to neglect the old woman or hurt her feelings in any way, the girl, on her return home, did not quite resume the old place or enter again upon the relationship which Aunt Nancy fancied should subsist between them. Truth to tell, Alicia was more interested in the general proposition with relation to the negro race to which she had engaged herself, than in any particular individual, even old Aunt Nancy — that is the mistake of most social reformers, they shrink from the personal application of their theories!

So, since the love the old woman had borne Philip Chalden could not restrain Aunt Nancy, the less affection she had for

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his daughter proved no bar. She hesitated and Chalden was lost.

Often when Olney was with his humble parishioner, Alicia came to the sunny chamber which was now Aunt Nancy's world. The aged woman's affection for the preacher enabled her to divine something of what was going on in the man's heart. There are few secrets a man can keep from a loving woman, be she wife, or mother, or friend, and Aunt Nancy knew that Olney loved Alicia.

The fact roused in the old woman strange and impossible dreams. Strange feelings tore her bosom, strange revelations trembled on her lips. Alone most of the day, she brooded and brooded.

On her death-bed she called the preacher to her and made him a marvellous confession. With her dying hands she pressed into his palm a packet of old, time-faded papers. The man went gray as he bent his head to hear what the old woman had to tell. After she died under his own ab-

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solution, with the packet tightly clasped in his own hand, he staggered out of the house, and, not daring to trust himself on foot in the street, called a cab and was driven to his own study, his mind reeling as if he had had a stroke. He was appalled at the revelation the old woman had made. But for the confirming evidence in his hand he would have disregarded it as the foolish dream of a fatuous old dotard.

That night, as she had insisted and as he had promised, he had an interview with Philip Chalden. The financier listened to him at first with indifference, soon succeeded by amazement, rage, and terror. When Olney left the house an hour after, he had refused wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. He had given his word of honor to keep a secret, the keeping of which broke his heart; and yet there was a strange exaltation in his soul, the exaltation which comes alone from the sacrifice of self, which almost compensated him for what he had done. And there was one man in

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that great city in which Olney worked and labored who knew him, negro though he might be, for a man and a master.

Everybody recognized that there was something mysterious about Chalden. He refused persistently to discuss his early life. No one knew anything about his place of birth or his young manhood. He had suddenly appeared in Philadelphia, attended only by the baby Alicia and the old black woman. Without vouchsafing explanation of any sort he had made his upward way, climbed to his own place. The keenest and cleverest questioning had never betrayed him into committing himself in the slightest degree. There were many men who would have given much to discover his early history, for they were persuaded his silence concealed something which it would be highly advantageous to his many enemies to know. Now Olney knew it, and his pledged honor made of him, constructively at least, Chalden's friend. Yet Chalden hated him.

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It had been many years after Chalden came to Philadelphia before he rose to prominence, and, try as they could, and some of the best detectives in the country had been covertly employed to solve the mystery, they found nothing. Olney had solved it in part, the most bitter part. He would not have been human had he not felt elated. It is not so much the use, the employment of power, as the possession of it that satisfies some men. Philip Chalden was in Olney's power, and Olney, who could not be bribed or frightened, had voluntarily promised to stay his hand. But Olney had done wrong — at least he was doubtful, and with a man of Olney's temperament there was condemnation in the doubt. A slighted conscience tempered pride, alloyed sacrifice, weakened power, and added its pangs to those of love, unrequited and hopeless — yet it was for Alicia that he had promised what he had.

As for Chalden, the whole situation,

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and more than all his impotence in it, shook him to the very soul. Face to face with a man who knew what he had set his whole mind and soul upon concealing and forgetting, a man who could neither be bought nor broken, neither awed nor coerced — he would have killed him if occasion had served.

Late the night of his interview with the clergyman Chalden made his way upstairs to the chamber of his old mammy. He looked down upon her dead body, decently laid out for burial, with the malevolent gaze of a baffled autocrat, a checked conqueror. Yet long ago he had lain in her arms, she had loved him. He would have staked his life on her fidelity, but she had proved false to him. Why he had retained that confidence in her was suddenly become a mystery to him — perhaps because she was only a black woman, he thought. He had been for once in his life a fool. Once was enough.

He had juggled with honor, man's

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honor, as he had juggled with stocks. Everything with him had been simply a question of dollars and cents. It was all a matter of price. The only question worth bothering about was "how much?" The same hour in which the old woman, by betraying him for what price he knew not, had confirmed his theory, the young man, by volunteering to keep his secret without money and without price, had broken it down; yet only in part.

Chalden knew men and women. At least he knew the baser side of the race he mastered and despised. He did not believe that it was in any human heart to keep such a secret as the clergyman possessed. There was one passion of which he had known little for twenty years. If it had been explained to him again he might have been enlightened. It was not consideration for Chalden that would keep Olney silent, but love for Alicia that would seal his lips. Chalden had loved once in his life, and his affection had been basely betrayed. There-

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after he only hated, and he viewed as a sign of weakness the showing of any sort of affection—except for Alicia. It rather alarmed him when he thought of the hold Alicia was taking upon him.

VIII

THE Major passed his days in broken-hearted discontent. Chalden's acceptance of William Penn as a suitor for his daughter, William Penn's determination to persist in his opposition to the Major's desire, all conspired to make him most miserable. He had seen Alicia at church and at different places in company with his nephew. Once, at the Opera, William Penn, with Alicia on his arm, had cornered him and he had been presented to her. Her beauty had impressed him powerfully, it always did everyone, and he thought too much of himself to be guilty of any open rudeness to her, but he was greatly relieved when William Penn took her away, and his determined opposition was not weakened a bit. The girl knew all about the Major's feeling toward the marriage. Her lover had not concealed it, and she was grieved

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in that knowledge, but she had nevertheless avowed her willingness to marry William Penn in spite of the family antagonism which had been awakened, trusting to win him to her side in the end. Doctor Whyot was of full age and could decide for himself, so Alicia sensibly reasoned — besides, she loved him too much to give him up.

With the obstinacy of small natures the Major still refused to acquiesce in the situation. The will which had been drawn up in his anger remained unchanged, and he had no more to do with his nephew than he could help. Indeed, the Major began, with anxiety and fear be it said, to contemplate matrimony himself. Why! the real true Whyot line might perish from the face of the earth! Either alternative was dreadful. To give up his ease and be in his old age at the beck and call of a woman was frightful for him to contemplate. The Major's ideas of the sphere and place of women were as low as Philip Chalden's

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ideas of men, which was saying a great deal.

The old man passed his days in revolving countless fruitless and impracticable schemes to separate the lovers and prevent the marriage. On one occasion he dreamed of entering the financial world, of taking up the battle against Chalden, of attempting to ruin him! No consciousness of inferiority deterred him from this fatuous undertaking, but he realized that, were Alicia poor, William Penn's honor — the Whyot honor — would second his affection and the situation would be more hopeless than before.

It became speedily known in Philadelphia that a marriage between William Penn Whyot and Alicia Chalden had been arranged. There was no secret made as to the displeasure of the Whyot family and their associates, indeed the Major had been outspoken on the subject. His remarks and those of his friends who agreed with him had come to the ears of Philip

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Chalden, and the latter had determined to revenge himself by bringing the Major to the brink of ruin. When the Major got to the brink if he behaved himself he might be pulled back, if he did not he would be shoved over. Chalden would thus deter any of the Major's friends or acquaintances from further animadversions upon him. A word or two to his trusted brokers started a raid on a certain line of stocks much affected by conservative Philadelphians for their apparent solidity and freedom from fluctuation, in which most of the Major's holdings were involved, with those of hundreds of other people. Chalden did not care for those others; he was after the Major primarily, the Major's friends incidentally, who else might suffer did not matter to him. Chalden didn't appear in the enterprise, and neither William Penn Whyot nor the Major realized his connection with the affair.

The surprised Major woke up one morning, however, to find that he stood just

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where Chalden had determined he should stand, on the verge of ruin, with the events of the ensuing day to decide whether he should go back or over. The poor little Major was no financier. Other men, caring nothing for the Major, fought Chalden, for they soon realized who was behind the movement that was bearing down the Major's stocks, because they wanted to hit Chalden and they always fought him whatever he did; but they fought him unavailingly. So far as the Major was concerned he had to stand helpless; stop, listen, or wait, with what equanimity he possessed, for the results. At this critical stage in the Major's fortunes there came to him one Buldon, a principal operator in the stock market, who, like the Major, stood to lose or win all, to such a point had his opposition to Chalden brought him with the rest.

So urgent was the business, such a crisis their fortunes were facing, that Buldon, who was distantly allied to the Whyot class

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and usually transacted their business for them, ventured to call upon the Major at his home before he had finished his breakfast, which was most annoying, for the Major did not like to mix business — what he called business — with his meals. Really, Buldon was getting inconsiderate!

Buldon had brought with him an unknown man, unknown to the Major, that is. This person, actuated by a desire for revenge for certain reasons which were soon revealed, after years of search claimed to have discovered what he believed to be the secret of Chalden's life. The secret was not one that reflected greatly upon Chalden himself. To have published it would not have harmed him in the least in public respect. It involved Alicia's mother. Buldon had only the vaguest idea of what the man had to tell. He had learned that the man had made certain investigations alone and had become possessed of certain valuable information. With his secret he had come back to Philadelphia, and, being a

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cunning man, had quietly investigated the present state of affairs in order to make the best possible use of it.

He feared to go to Chalden direct. The power of the man was so tremendous, his courage was so well known, that the investigator decided to hold his secret until he could approach Chalden through some third party, so that he personally could escape the consequences of the millionaire's displeasure. And there were other reasons why he feared to meet Chalden face to face. He preferred to strike him through a third party, himself unknown. When he learned of the antagonism of the Whyot family to the proposed marriage, when he discovered the social position of Major Whyot in Philadelphia, he determined that in him lay his opportunity. The raid on the Major's stock, which was now of public notoriety, gave him a further leverage, he thought.

There was an exciting interview between Buldon and the Major that morn-

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ing, the third man listening silently to what was going on.

"I tell you," said the former, "that it will mean ruin to us all. Your holdings of the stock will not bring five cents on the dollar. It is going down, and we can't stop it. Chalden is behind it all. Nobody else has power and money enough to do it. That stock ought to be as good as the Bank of England. It's been as steady as United States bonds. Unless we can put a brake on him we are ruined, ruined, I say! It means that you and your friends who own most of the stock will be reduced to beggary! You'll have to go to work, or starve. Here is this man who wants to talk with you. He says he knows something about Chalden that will be of great service to us. I don't know what it is, he hasn't told me. He won't tell anyone but you, because you have a deeper interest in getting hold of Chalden than any of us, he says, in downing this infernal devil-fish who has us in his clutches. I leave him

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with you, and I tell you frankly, unless you can do something with or without his information, it's all up with us. Good-by. Let me know at the earliest possible moment at Larnard's office if anything is to be done."

Leaving the other man, Buldon turned on his heel and left the house as abruptly as he had spoken. The Major had only grasped two or three points in this concise statement. Ruin, beggary, work! They were equally distasteful. Chalden, whom he hated, was at the back of it!

"Well — er — Mr. — I did not catch your name, sir," he said, turning to the shifty looking man standing impudently and easily before him.

"Call me Jackens, sir, that's as good a name as any."

"You have something to say to me which may be of service in this — er — crisis, Mr. — ah — Jackens?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'm no business man. You should

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have a talk with Larnard, my broker, or Mr. Buldon, but ——"

"This ain't so much in the way of business, sir, as you might think."

"Well, what is it?"

"For reasons which I needn't go into, I've been very much interested in finding out what I could about Philip Chalden's early life. And, by a singular combination of circumstances, which you don't care to hear about now, I've been able to trace him up. I know what nobody else knows about him," he cried triumphantly. "His proper name is Avery."

"I know it," answered the Major calmly; "don't shout so."

"The h — l you do!"

"Sir, sir!" said the Major, peremptorily, "I want you to understand that you are in a gentleman's private house, and such language as that from a — er — a person in your station to one of — er — mine is not permissible."

"No offence, no offence, sir," answered

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the other promptly, concealing his surprise, "as between gentlemen ——"

"Proceed, sir," interrupted the Major in the calmest manner, utterly disgusted at the effrontery of the other — a "gentleman," indeed!

"Well, perhaps you know the whole story?" he inquired sneeringly.

"What I know, and what I do not know, are no concern of yours, sir. If you have anything to say, say it. If not, go! This interview is becoming — er — distasteful to me."

"Sir, the main thing I have found about Chalden is that he was a young blood in St. Louis some twenty-five years ago, that his wife ran away from him with another man. That he followed her, shot the man dead, and that the woman committed suicide. That Chalden took his daughter and vanished — gave himself out for dead. I traced him to Italy and I traced him back here. Now, I reckon that information is worth more to Chalden than to anybody

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else, unless it is to you. There is not a soul on earth that knows it, unless it's me, and there's many a man that would give a pot of money to find it out. There's newspapers, there's men that wishes to down him, there's yourself, that could bring him to his knees. That precious daughter of his that your nephew is to marry against your will, how'd he like to know that she was the daughter of an adulteress, a suicide, and that her father killed a man? Damn him!" went on the other fiercely, revealing the motive of his rage. "I was a speculator in a small way. He's done me up, I was in his employ and he kicked me out of it——"

Mr. Jackens did not say that his discharge was for a good and sufficient cause.

"And I swore I'd get even with him. He ruined hundreds with his stock market tricks, curse him, includin' me!" he went on in a spasm of virtue, "and now I've got him right there!"

He extended his hand with down-turned

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thumb toward the Major, who recoiled from the possible touch as if from contamination.

The Major was calm, deadly calm, outwardly, but he had never been so furiously angry, so outraged, so insulted, in his life. *Au fond* the blood of the de Vyault was good blood still.

"You wish me to go to Mr. Chalden with this news?"

"I do, sir."

"I suppose you are not doing this for mere revenge?"

"Lord, no, it's too expensive for me. I want money, lots of it. I reckon it will take about a cool million in cold cash to shut me up."

"And — er — what do you expect me to get out of the enterprise?" continued the old man in that suspiciously quiet voice.

If Mr. Jackens had not been so excited over the prospect, being a man of great native shrewdness, he would have seen the storm which was about to break.

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"Well, you can get what you want. If I was you I'd stop this raid on your stocks, and I'd make him withdraw his consent to the marriage of his daughter to your nephew——"

"You hound!" cried the Major, bursting into furious wrath, "you infamous dog! You come here with such a proposition to me after prying into the antecedents of a gentleman, a gentleman! Yes, damn it, sir, and you ask me to soil myself, me a Whyot, sir, by any such dirty underhand business as blackmailing, sir?"

As he spoke the little Major snatched a riding crop from the table in the library, where the conversation had taken place, and in a perfect passion of fury struck the man again and again with the handle of it. Mr. Jackens was half as large again as the Major; physically the latter was no match at all for him, but such was the fury which filled the old man that the younger absolutely cowered before him.

"By God, sir!" he spluttered, vainly

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seeking to protect his head and face as he shrank back against the wall writhing with pain, blood dropping from lips and nose and gashed cheek. "You'll pay for this! He'll pay for it. I'll wait until tomorrow. Until he has ruined you, and then I'll ruin him!"

"I warn you," said the Major, throwing the bloody crop to the floor in disgust, "not to cross my path again, ruin or no ruin. And I warn you further, I have some slight knowledge of Mr. Chalden. I venture to say that if you open your mouth concerning him with any such story you will repent it to your dying day. Cato," he continued more calmly, touching a bell, in answer to which his black footman entered, "show this person the door. Do not allow him access to me again."

"Yas, suh."

Cato was six feet two. He laid his hand on the man's shoulder, turned him to the right-about, and marched him out.

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"You may kick him out, Cato," cried the Major as they disappeared through the doorway.

The little Major sank down in his chair trembling with righteous indignation. He had never been so insulted in his life. The fact that the man had given away the secret and that Chalden was now in his power never came to him. The Major was not a practical man. He had been outraged in his finer feelings, and not the least hard portion of his situation lay in the fact that anyone had presumed to make such a proposition to him, a Whyot!

"Cato," he asked, as the man re-entered the room, "did you kick him out?"

"Yas, suh," responded the black man, rolling his eyes with delight — it is not often a negro has such an opportunity — "I kicked him good, suh, an' he lay at de foot of de steps, suh, a-shakin' his fis' an' a-cussin' most awful, suh. He said ——"

"I am not interested in what he had to

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say, Cato," said the Major loftily. "By the way, order my carriage at once."

As he entered the *coupé* anyone passing might have heard him direct his coachman to drive to the Chalden building, where he hoped to find the financier.

IX

CHALDEN was very much surprised that morning when the Major's card was brought to him in his private office. Things were going his way — they usually did — and the stocks in which the Major's property was invested would soon be in his possession at his own price, his price for everybody and everything was a low one — like the devil he always bought cheap. The day would see the ruin of the Major. Naturally it immediately occurred to Chalden that the Major had come to beg off. He at once jumped to the conclusion, although he was not a man who jumped to conclusions usually, that the Major would fain purchase his safety by withdrawing his opposition to the marriage. As to that Chalden cared not a whit for the opposition of the Major. It rather pleased him than otherwise. He delighted to crush

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opposition, and he was never so unhappy as when the day was made plain and easy for him. Therefore he resolved not to stop his raid on the Major's stocks, and not to be moved by any plea which might be urged. He had determined on the man's ruin, and ruined he should be. After that, if the Major behaved with propriety, he might do something — it would depend on many things. He kept the Major waiting a few moments. It suited his pleasure to do so, but finally he directed that he should be admitted into the private office.

The agitation and indignation of the Major had not evaporated at all. On the contrary, they had become greatly intensified. The more he thought of it the more angry he became. Chalden therefore found himself confronted by a very excited little man. He wondered if the Major was ever calm. This morning his red face was redder than ever. He was fairly shaking with emotion.

"Mr. Chalden —" he burst out.

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"Good morning, Major Whyot. Be seated, sir. What can I do for you?"

"For me? Nothing, sir," spluttered the Major; "we have not been — our relations — in short, sir, I dislike you, as you probably dislike me."

"You didn't come here to tell me that, sir?"

"No, sir, but a damned scoundrelly hound, a man who says he is an ex-clerk of yours, came to me this morning with a — a — nasty tale, sir, and — er — made a proposition to me, which need not be discussed, but it was infamous, sir, insulting to me, sir, a Whyot! And I have come to —"

"To blackmail me," instantly flashed into the mind of Chalden. He knew there were passages in his past which he would give everything he owned to keep secret. Fortunately for him he said nothing. If the Major had not been so excited, however, he would have marked the change in Chalden's appearance. Hard at best, the

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man became as cold as an iceberg. His usually immobile face was as expressionless as a stone wall. The narrowing of his eyes, the gleam that came in them, the compression of his lips, alone betrayed his indomitable spirit. A hard man to blackmail was Philip Chalden.

"I have come to put you on your guard, sir, against the scoundrel," continued the little man.

He had never appeared to better advantage in his life than at this moment. Chalden's jaw relaxed, his brow smoothed, his eyes opened wider, and he gazed at the Major in speechless astonishment. To have an advantage and not to use it, against an enemy! Why, the man must be a fool — or a gentleman!

There was good blood in Chalden. He rose instantly to the Major's height. For the first time in many years a feeling of shame that he had so misjudged the other man permeated his soul. Chalden as a rule was only ashamed when he failed, and he

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had no cause to be ashamed on that score since he had been in Philadelphia. When he spoke, however, his remarks were entirely commonplace. Yet he was burning with anxiety to know what was the revelation. It might be any one of several things of varying degrees of importance to him.

"What, may I ask, was the story?"

"I dislike to repeat it, sir," answered the Major slowly, "but I suppose there is no help for it. The man said — that your name was Avery."

"I told you that myself last spring."

"You did. He went on to say that you were from St. Louis."

"Another piece of stale news to you."

"It was. That when you were a young man — forgive the repetition, sir — your wife — ran away — from you with — er — your best friend, that you followed them, caught them, and — ah — shot the man dead. Your wife committed suicide — after that you — ah — disappeared

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with your daughter, only to reappear under a new name some fifteen years later in Philadelphia ——"

The Major spoke hesitatingly and with difficulty. He regretted extremely even to voice the story. It was neither a pleasant nor an easy task.

"Well, sir, is that all?" asked Chalden coolly, conscious at first of a feeling of relief and yet wondering if there was more to the story.

"That's all," answered the Major; "and whether the story be true or not — I — er — felt it due from one gentleman to another to apprise you immediately of it in order that you — ah — might take such steps as your judgment dictates to stop the scoundrel's mouth."

"The man's name was ——"

"Jackens. At least, that's what he said it was."

"I know him. He is an ex-clerk of mine. He was a small operator in stocks who got in my way. I broke him, then

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out of pity for him, one of the rare times when I have given way to the sentiment, I gave him employment. He was a scoundrel. He proved false to his trust. There was a betrayal, a forgery. He fled. I shall know how to deal with him."

"I supposed you would," answered the Major.

"Do you know where he is to be found?"

"Er — no. He left my house rather — ah — suddenly. In fact, I am ashamed to say that I lost my temper with him and I — ah — caned him severely."

"He is twice your size," remarked Chalden, surveying the slight figure of the older man, "and half your age."

"What has that got to do with it? After I had done with him I turned him over to my negro servant and he — er — kicked him out, I believe. I warned him that if he valued his life he would better keep quiet about his — ah — fabrication."

"It is a true story," interrupted Chal-

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den, quietly. "Absolutely true. I suppose it is bound to get out sooner or later. I shall, however, silence this man for the present, and I shall depend upon your consideration to let it go no further."

"You may count upon me, sir," answered the Major.

"Of course this action of yours was taken for my daughter's sake?"

Chalden watched him curiously as he asked this question.

"Well, not quite. Of course I should be loath indeed to see her — or any other lady — involved in — er — unpleasant publicity. But I think I should have come to you in any event — as — a — ah — gentleman, you know." Whether he meant Chalden or himself was not quite clear. "She — Miss Alicia, I presume — er — was the — ah — daughter?"

"You may presume so," said Chalden in his haughtiest manner, effectually estopping any further inquiries in that direction. "Now, sir, you have rendered me a

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service. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Nothing, sir," answered the Major, astonished at this question.

He had forgotten all about the monetary situation, or if he remembered it he was not the man either to ask or to expect a reward, or even to accept any, for the doing of a gentle action.

Chalden questioned him further.

"This marriage is still distasteful to you?"

"It is, sir," more surprised than ever.

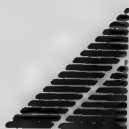
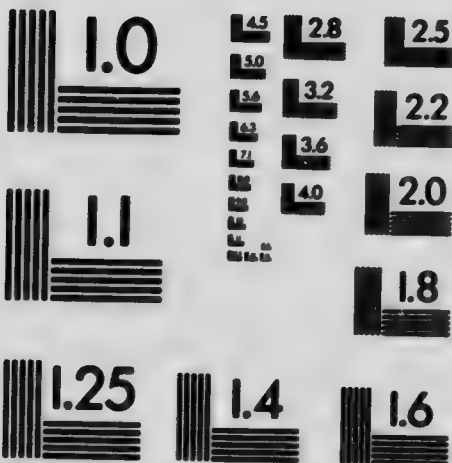
"Ah, well, I am sorry, for I have set my heart upon it."

"I have nothing to say on that score," replied the older man; "naturally this — er — affair has not made me feel more kindly toward the alliance — with due respect to the young lady, of course. However, we need not enter into a further discussion of that point?" Chalden bowed gravely. "I have warned you of the blackguard. I hope you may be able to



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deal with him, and I have the honor to bid you good-morning, sir."

The Major bowed profoundly, turned on his heel, and left the office. This time decidedly the honors of war were with him. Chalden instantly summoned his private secretary and confidential clerk.

"Johnson," he said, "see my broker immediately. Reverse all former directions. I want the Whyot stocks forced up to the highest possible price. I want it done immediately. Don't spare any expense in bulling them up. Never mind the cost. I will stand for it whatever it may be."

"Very good, sir," answered the secretary, too well trained to show his surprise at this sudden reversal of policy, so unusual in his employer; "but don't you think you had better give me a line to the broker, the present order being at variance with the original plan?"

"Here it is," said Chalden, after scribbling a moment, "tell him to lose no time

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about it. I want to see the stocks go up at once, before the exchange closes, and they must be higher than they were before we began this raid. Send somebody in to me as you go out."

As the second clerk came in Chalden directed him to call up on the telephone the Director of Public Safety at the City Hall immediately. When the financier got him, a brief conversation took place which sufficed to put the best detectives in the city on the track of Mr. Jackens. It would not be a difficult matter to find the man who showed signs of such severe handling as Major Whyot had given him, and the Director promised that the prisoner should be at Chalden's service in a few hours without fail.

The nerves of the Major were so broken and shattered by the events of the morning that he concluded to go to his club. There about twelve o'clock Buldon and Larnard, the Major's attorney and financial agent, appeared in search of him. They found

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him calmly enjoying a cigar over the papers.

"Well, you did it all right," exclaimed Buldon when they got him alone in a private room.

"Did what?" asked the Major innocently.

"Man, our stocks are going up!" cried the operator triumphantly. "Somebody is bulling the market like mad. There has been a reaction. I do not know the cause of it, unless you did it, but the bears have fled to cover. Rumor has it that old Chalden is caught on the wrong side of the market and is getting tremendously cinched."

The Major shuddered at his friend's coarse language — "So Western, you know!"

"We are helping the thing along all we can," continued Buldon joyfully. "If it all goes well they'll close higher than they have been quoted for a dozen years, and now that we have got them up, we will

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keep them there. Indeed, nobody seems to have any particular interest in bearing them down. You are saved, Major. We all are. Did you see Chalden this morning?"

"Yes, I saw him."

"I feel that we owe you a debt of gratitude," said the other; "how did you put the pressure on him?"

"Pressure, sir? By gad! Sir!" burst out the Major, enraged all over again just as he had regained a measure of his usual calm. "I caned one man this morning for daring to insinuate that I ——"

"No offence, no offence, Major," exclaimed the other man. "Was it the man I brought you?"

"It was, sir."

"And his story?"

"A damned outrageous piece of blackmailing!"

"You didn't use it on Chalden, of course," remarked Buldon, warned by the Major's rising fury.

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"Certainly not, sir! I would not do such a thing to save myself from ruin."

"May I ask just what you did, Major?" queried Larnard quietly.

"What you or any other gentleman would have done. I had the blackguard kicked out of my house, and then I went immediately to Mr. Chalden and warned him that an attempt to blackmail him was being made."

"You didn't say anything about the stocks?"

"I said nothing, sir, nothing but that. Would you have me mix up my business matters with an affair of honor of that kind, sir?"

"Certainly not, Major," promptly answered the astonished Buldon, winking at the broker. "Well, at any rate, the stocks are going up."

"Did Mr. Chalden say anything about these stocks?" asked the lawyer curiously.

"Nothing. By gad, he did not even

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thank me!" answered the Major with some resentment.

"Well, Major, shall I sell or hold them?" continued Larnard. "What shall I do with your shares?"

"Hold them, sir," answered the Major promptly. "The stock is just as good now as it ever was. It has been in my family ever since I can remember. These — er — fluctuations are unnatural, I'm sure."

"Very good," said the broker imperturbably.

"Major," said Buldon as they took their departure, "allow me to say it, you are a gentleman. You put us all to shame."

The Major was utterly unable to fathom the curious glances of the men, and he would have been more surprised at the uproarious laughter which burst from them as they left the club.

"The old innocent," said the operator, "he worked it in the very best way. Oh, unwittingly, of course," he added in the face of the other's unspoken protest. "He

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could not have driven Chalden an inch with anything, I fancy."

"I do not think we would better mention this affair to anyone," returned the lawyer. "Or we shall have to deal with Chalden ourselves, and he's a good man to be at peace with."

"Yes," returned the other, "we must keep it entirely quiet. And I doubt if we could improve on the Major's methods anyway."

X

ALICIA CHALDEN and her father during the past six months had entered upon a new relationship to each other. Philip Chalden had shown more tenderness for his daughter in that time than he had manifested toward her during all the rest of her life. During her school-days she had seen but little of her father, whom she had adored possibly because she knew so little of him. He had rarely visited the school, and in her long vacations he had usually managed to send her abroad or upon some sightseeing expedition, under the care of some of the teachers, who were always ready to undertake the duties of a chaperon on such a liberal scale as Chalden's generosity encouraged.

He cheerfully supplied Alicia with everything for which she asked, and many

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things for which she had not, and as evidence of the satisfaction he felt in her treatment at the school he had been one of the most generous benefactors of Brookford College. He rebuilt Hulswood Hall after the fire, for instance, making it the finest college dormitory building in the country. Beginning with her graduation, when he suddenly awakened to the realization of her beauty and intelligence, had come a new order.

Beneath his cold exterior, his natural and sedulously cultivated calm, he was a man with great capacity for affection. Disuse had not quite atrophied this faculty. That he had kept his feelings under control for so long had made the giving way to them the more sweeping. Into the lonely heart of the man Alicia had made way, until now she had become all in all to him. He had worked for the mere pleasure of succeeding. He had beaten down opposition, he had mastered, wherever he went, whatever he touched, for supremacy's sake.

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Now he was working for Alicia's sake. Yet he said nothing about it.

There was a cloud upon Alicia's birth through no fault of her own. Well, he would make up to her for it, if he could, by leaving her mistress of such wealth as had never been enjoyed by any mortal woman before. She was beautiful, she was gracious, she was cultured, she was charming. He would make her rich beyond the most extravagant desire, he thought. Allied to Doctor Whyot, who was a splendid representative of the ancient family whose name he bore, she would take and maintain a position second to none in the land. The material forces of the world he had at his command. He would lay them at the feet of Alicia. Whatever happened she should have money, and, as he had been said, money was still Philip Chalden's god.

On her part, while Alicia dreamed no dreams of untold riches, she gloried in her father's new-found affection for her. She had divined in a little while, after she had

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come home to live with him, that Philip Chalden could not unlearn in a few days the habits of years. He was actually as undemonstrative as the Major fancied he was, but Alicia knew and thrilled to the softer light in the old man's eyes, the flicker of a smile upon his stern, cold lips, the fugitive resort to a caress, when he laid an unwonted hand awkwardly but tenderly upon her. Yet as the days passed by, and she saw more and more of her father, Alicia was not altogether happy in his affection.

Alicia was a woman of the very highest principle; her intimates at school called her Quixotic. Perhaps she had a little of the narrowness of enthusiastic youth. Time, which dims the eye, would soften her views and widen her horizon, of course. Alicia would no more have done a wrong thing than she would have cut off her hand. Time would not change that, but age might bring charity and a tolerant heart; for the present she was a little severe, but

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more severe with herself than with anyone else. She brought to the service of her moral efforts the same qualities which had brought success to her father. She was a High Churchwoman, with many of the qualities of the devotee. Nothing mean, or low, or small, found lodgement in Alicia's breast. She was pure, unselfish, honorable to the last degree. And, as she knew her father better, as he unwittingly took her more and more into his confidence, as he unconsciously allowed her to see his estimates of men and things, as she began to apprehend, dimly of course, his habit of thought, his business methods, she began to question in her own mind the ethics of her father.

With the consciousness of his affection came the consciousness of — what shall it be called? — his moral weakness, from her point of view. She saw with pain that he was unaware of her unspoken censure, that he saw nothing wrong in transactions which she reprehended in her heart. He

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did not know or realize what she was thinking, for she shrank from discussing the matter with him — as yet. Chalden did nothing criminal, nothing actionable; he used the methods and means in vogue, which his opponents used, without scruple. He played the game as he had learned to play it; he played it better, however, more subtly, more successfully than anybody else.

Whether her father's ideas were legal or illegal was nothing to Alicia. She looked beyond the letter of the law, and little by little a poisonous conviction that her father did not attain, did not try to attain, did not even recognize, the high standard she set for herself, entered as a blight upon the growing intimacy in which she had taken such pride and delight. That her father should be at fault! It was crushing. She might have lost faith in man, in God, but for the sterling integrity of her lover, and for the saintly piety and pure disinterestedness of one like Henry

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Olney, whose powerful helper she had become. Alicia spent many agonized hours trying to decide what was her duty in reference to her father. But she had not yet solved the question.

Between her lover, her father, and her work she found no time for idleness. The latter especially engrossed her time during the day. As Alicia came nearer and nearer the practical side of the problem, as she herself got in touch with the actual negro, she found the theories which she had formed were terribly incomplete and inadequate. The difficulties confronting her endeavor grew steadily greater as she increased in knowledge, but she faced them with the indomitable resolution of her father. She had lost no faith whatever in the basic correctness of her ideas. She had the serene self-confidence of the fanatic, the martyr. She never doubted for a moment but that God was with her, as He had been her preserver — but she recognized the obstacles which constantly sprang

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up in her way. The theory under which she was working was undoubtedly correct, but how bring about the realization of the dream? Rougher hands than Alicia's had grappled with that problem, greater brains than hers had sought to solve it, and are still trying to solve it, in vain; but Alicia was young and undaunted, she did not despair.

The temporal and spiritual affairs of the mission prospered as never before. Olney should have been the happiest man in the world had his work been first in his heart. His parish was a centre of activity and successful missionary work, such as always results from a combination of opportunity, talent, and money. The negroes of the city furnished the opportunity, Alicia provided the money, Henry Olney the talent; yet Olney was the unhappiest man alive. The glory of self-sacrifice had vanished. Though he had stayed his hand for Alicia's sake, he felt farther away from her than before. Devote himself as he could to the

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work of his parish, its widening scope only brought him more frequently in the presence of the woman he loved without hope, and that hopelessness was fast becoming unbearable.

He saw her so often now that the effort required to maintain his personal immobility was killing him. So successful had he been that Alicia at last felt less conscious of his devotion than at first. Perhaps she had been mistaken, so superb had been his self-effacement. As her father, and her lover, and her work, engrossed her the more, Olney felt that he was becoming simply a machine to her. Not that her gracious kindness, her unfailing courtesy, was ever abated, but she was a little forgetful of him. He had revelled in the knowledge that she knew that he loved her, though he might not speak. He had felt that she had pitied him, and he was so beggared in self-esteem by the constant realization of that one black streak in him, that he had craved even her pity. But now he realized that

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she was getting away from his influence. Mad jealousy, hopeless affection, all were breaking him down. He was fairly perishing with a love that was unknown, unrequited, and impossible.

XI

LATE in the afternoon of the day the Major called upon her father at his office Alicia drove back to her home from her daily visit to the mission. The highly trained English factotum met her as she entered the hall.

"There is a — er — person in the library waiting for you, Miss Chalden," he said as she turned to the stairs.

"What sort of a person?" asked Alicia curiously, the man's manner was so strange.

"Er — a very badly knocked up man, I should say, Miss."

"Knocked up? What do you mean?"

"Well, he is all done up in bandages. His head has been hammered by somebody, his clothes are torn."

"What does he want of me?"

"He says he wants to see you on par-

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ticular business. He seems to be in an awful hurry. He's been a-fidgetin' like mad in the room there. I didn't want to admit him, Miss, but he said it was a matter of great importance. I've had James" — the other footman — "a-watchin' him ever since. Will you see him, Miss?"

"Certainly, Robert," answered the girl. "Stay within call, so that you can come to me if I need you."

With some curiosity Alicia entered the library, from which James, the footman, immediately made his exit upon a signal from her, and surveyed the man.

Mr. Jackens was a painful spectacle. He had evidently gone to a hospital and had had his face, cut and bruised fearfully from the Major's fierce caning, done up in bandages. He rose nervously to his feet as the girl came in.

"Miss Chalden," he cried, "your father, ma'am?"

"He will not be here for some time. Do you wish to see him?"

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"God forbid!"

Alicia was very much surprised at this ejaculation, whose fervency denoted its honesty.

"What can I do for you?" she said, advancing toward him. "You seem to be injured, or in pain."

"It's nothing to do with that," he cried roughly; "I hate your father. He's used me ill."

"It is not possible that he is responsible for this?" asked Alicia in alarm.

"No, curse it," cried the man.

"Stop!" exclaimed the girl decisively.

"If you wish to talk to me further you must refrain from language of that kind. Another word, sir, in that strain," she continued, extending her hand toward the electric bell on the library table, as he opened his mouth to protest, "and I will have you put out of the house."

The baffled man glared at her, quivering with impotent rage.

"I thought you were in trouble, suffer-

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ing," continued Alicia composedly, "and perhaps had come to me for help. But I see I have been mistaken. Now you will declare your business at once."

She looked so like her father, the words came from her with such clear-cut decision, that the man secretly quailed before her.

"I was beat up this way by a man named Whyot."

"Not Doctor Whyot!"

"No, it was his uncle. He done me up. They both did."

"I don't understand."

"The uncle beat me, the doctor, not knowin' it, bandaged me."

"I have no interest in all this," said Alicia, "and I don't see ——"

"You have; your father done me an injury. I'm goin' to get even with him in the person of his daughter, however I can. Your mother ——"

The man stopped abruptly to give weight to his disclosure by his hesitation, and then, to stimulate the curiosity of the

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woman before him, he said again, slowly and with a malevolent leer at her:

"Your mother ——"

"What of my mother?"

"Did you know her? Do you remember her?"

"I cannot conceive that my personal affairs have any interest whatever to you," answered the girl haughtily, although her heart was beating wildly. The man's manner was at once so mean and so sinister. Alicia was brave, but in spite of herself a cold fear gripped her heart. She would hear no more.

"I must terminate this conversation. You say my father injured you. Though I do not believe it, you would better have recourse to him. I decline to discuss my mother, or anything further with you. As it is ——"

She extended her hand toward the bell.

"Don't touch that bell!" cried the man suddenly, "unless you want me to tell

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your servants that your mother was an adulteress, a suicide, and your father a murderer!"

"What do you mean?" asked the girl in bewilderment. She was too surprised to take in the full import of the disclosure; indeed there was so much of it and it was of such a nature that at first it failed of its purpose.

"I mean, what I say!" said the man, disappointed at her unexpected calm. "It's true. Your mother ran away with another man, your father shot the man dead, then she committed suicide. Your mother left you a baby in arms."

"It is false!"

"It's the truth. Don't you put on any of your airs with me! Why, you've got no right to the name you bear. Your real name is ——"

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed Alicia, beginning to take in the purport of the man's abominable words and instantly resolving to hear nothing more, "to come here, here

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to me, a woman, with such a scandalous tale! Not another word!"

She struck the bell fiercely, and, not satisfied with that, she raised her voice.

"James! Robert!" she called.

The two men, who had waited without in the hall, instantly entered the room.

"What are you going to do?" cried the man in alarm. "Do you want me to tell them?"

"Tell anybody," she answered royally.

"I am not afraid by such a tissue of lies as those you have told me, but there is one person to whom you shall tell them."

"Who is that?"

"My father."

"Good God!" gasped the man.

"Yes, and you shall stay here until he comes. Robert, you and James see that this person doesn't leave this room; not under any circumstances, until Mr. Chalden returns."

"I'll tell them," yelled the baffled man, green with fear.

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"You say a word, you open your mouth — damn you — beggin' your pardon, Miss Chalden —" said Robert, who had been in the family for many years and was as faithful as he was trusted, "and I'll break your face up worse than it is! You'll need more bandages on than you've got now when I get through with you. I don't want to hear none of your lies."

"Don't hurt him, Robert," said Alicia, smiling faintly.

"No'm, I won't. Just leave him to us."

"Very well," said the girl, as she stepped into the hall. "I will wait for Mr. Chalden in the drawing-room."

"For God's sake, men!" began Jackens piteously when they were alone.

"Shut up!" said Robert; "you're not to talk, d'ye understand?"

"I ain't goin' to tell you nothin'," persisted the man, "I jest want to get out. Good Lord, I don't want to face that man! I'll make it worth your while ——"

"I tell you to shut up, and I mean it!"

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Miss Chalden is not here now, and I swear to you if you open your mouth again I'll hit you," cried the big footman, shaking his huge fist in front of the man's broken face.

XII

ALICIA walked into the drawing-room with her mind in a strange turmoil. Of course the statement was a lie. She would dismiss it from her mind and leave the man to her father. That was easier said than done. For instance, no one may escape completely from the influence of that most despicable of communications, an anonymous letter. It has its effect; though the letter be of the most wildly improbable character, one cannot forget it.

Instantly there came into the mind of the girl that she literally knew nothing about her mother. Her father had persistently refused to talk of her, no picture of her existed, at least she had never seen one. All she really knew was that her mother had died in giving her birth. She did not know anything of her father's an-

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cestry even. She had lately been told that he had been born in St. Louis, and that was all. Her earliest recollection was of Italy. The only woman she associated with her infancy was old black Aunt Nancy, and she was dead.

Suppose there were some truth in the story? What a disgrace! To be the daughter of a woman who had — no, it was not true, it could not be! Yet why had her father never told her anything about her mother? Why had he sternly dismissed the subject whenever she had touched upon it? The poison of the accusation permeated her being. Was it possible that her mother had been so lost as to break — She would put it out of her mind! It was a lie, a wicked lie, why should she credit it? The unsupported statement of a man of that stamp against the life of her father, her honorable father, upright — Oh, God, what had she learned from her father's business conduct? Was he an upright man? What had she begun

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dimly to apprehend of his code of morals? Was there a man's blood on his hands?

Ah, if she had but known it, the blood of many men was upon him. The life, the fortune, the happiness, of many had hung upon the turn of his hand, the nod of his head. He had beggared men and dishonored women; not directly, of course, but still none the less surely, as the result of his gigantic operations.

Yet, if the awful tale were true? If her mother had betrayed her father! If he had killed the man, had taken vengeance in his own hands! What then? Was he, could he have been, justified?

Alicia threw herself upon her knees and prayed as she had never prayed before. For the first time in her life trouble that sank deep down in her soul was upon her. She prayed that it might not be true, praying none the less fervently because she began to feel that she was praying against a hopeless fact. Her prayers brought little comfort, therefore. She felt revolted

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in her soul at the possibility. Her father, entering the hall in his usual noiseless manner, caught sight of her on her knees.

"Alicia," he asked, "what's the matter?"

"Oh, father," she answered, rising and going toward him, "tell me that it isn't true!"

"What isn't true?" he asked, slipping his arm around her waist to support her. He perceived that she was trembling like a leaf and her face was very white. "What has happened?" he questioned anxiously.

"I have been told a — story about my — my — mother."

Alicia, drawn close to him, could feel the start which even his iron self-repression could not control. There was no indignant question from him. The man, she instantly realized, was on guard, waiting.

"It isn't true!" she cried in alarm.

"What isn't true?" again asked Chal-
sely, and his own heart almost stopped its beating in fear of her answer.

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He made a false move, sure proof of his intense perturbation. "Who has been here?" he said suddenly. "Is it that canting hypocrite, Olney?"

"Why, father!" questioned the girl in startled surprise. "Mr. Olney! What has he to do with it? No, it's another man!"

"Thank God!" Chalden exclaimed, and the ejaculation was stored away in the girl's mind to be brought to light later. "What did he say?"

"He said — I don't like to tell you. He said that my mother was an — adulteress, a suicide. That you — killed him. That she left me, a baby — that my name is not Chalden."

The relief in the man's face was too great to be described. If Alicia had not been so excited she would have marked it. He stood silent, enfolding her in his arms. His heart was beating as it had never beat before. He could have faced the loss of his fortune, power, position, everything,

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with more equanimity than he welcomed his escape from the greatest crisis that could have come into his life. Although he said nothing, his brain was preternaturally active. Never had he thought with such clearness and concentration. He instantly dismissed his first fear.

It was evident to him after the first startled surprise that Jackens's story in some way had come to his daughter. He had thought of the possibility that sometime it might be made public. He had striven with all his skill to keep it concealed. He would rather anyone had heard it than Alicia, and now it had been brought directly to her. It was bad enough as it was — but — what should he do? Should he deny it all? His keen mind perceived instantly that that would involve him in explanations; that if he denied this story he might have to tell her that which he had so long concealed. Besides it was scarcely possible under the circumstances for him successfully to deceive her entirely,

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though he longed to do so. Yes, he would tell her. There was truth anyway in the story, to admit it was safest.

"Did Major Whyot tell you?" he asked after a pause, thinking perhaps after all the Major had proved a traitor, and regretting as he asked that he had spared him.

"Major Whyot! What has he to do with it? First Mr. Olney, then Major Whyot. Ah! It is true. You don't answer me! I am the daughter of that poor, wicked woman! What is our name?"

"My name is Avery."

"And is that my name?"

"Naturally."

"And my mother?"

"Dear child," said Chalden, drawing her to him again, "I would have spared you this. I am grieved beyond expression that you have learned it. I cannot deny it. The story is true. I married, very early in life, a young woman, one of my own class in St. Louis — I was born among

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the best and noblest there — and I loved her — God, how I loved her!" exclaimed the old man.

All the restraints of years were suddenly flung away from him. He told the story with all the fervor and passion of a lover; all the anger, bitterness, of the betrayed, vibrant in his voice. He was speaking truly now, the girl could feel it as she listened.

"I lavished everything on her. One child was born to us, a daughter. The woman was not worthy of my love. My best friend — it's an old story, but true. I've tried to put the remembrance of it out of my mind for years. They both deceived me basely. I pursued them, and, blind with rage, shot the man at her feet and left them. The woman I had loved and the man. One alive, one dead. When they found them they were both dead. The woman had exculpated me. She left a note saying she had taken her own life. I disposed of my property, changed my

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name, and left the country. I was the last of my family. The change of name was easy. I was baptized Charles Henry Alden Avery. I dropped Avery, prefixed my father's name, and put the initials to the Alden."

"And the baby?"

"The baby died ——"

"What!" she cried in horrified amazement. "And I?"

"No, no," he said, "you confuse me. The mother died, not the baby. I took the baby with me — to Italy. I lived there a number of years. Report of my death was spread about by my own contrivance. It was published broadcast, and then, after a long time, I came to Philadelphia. No one knew me. You know the rest."

"And was I that baby?"

And this time no nervous tremor shook the frame of the man again. Alicia lifted her head from his breast and looked at him as if she would fain look into his very soul. But he was on his guard now; his

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face was a mask behind which she could see nothing. He seemed so calm and so strong that her dawning suspicions were lulled into assurance. His perfectly simulated coolness disarmed her.

"Of course," he said quietly, "of course."

"My poor, poor father!" Her first thought was for him; later she would think of herself. "How you have suffered! But you should have told me."

"I concealed it for your happiness, my dear," answered Chalden.

"I know, but I am — we are — a false pretence, father. We do not go under our rightful name. We can't even tell anybody without spreading this awful truth. Oh, father, how could she do it? How could she do it? The daughter of a dishonored woman! What have I ever done! The sins of the parents, they are visited on the children. I learned that at school, but I never knew its meaning before. How could she do it? My poor father, but we

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have each other. I shall never leave you now. I shall show you that even with this tainted blood in my veins I can still be true."

"What do you mean?"

"I cannot marry Doctor Whyot now. I cannot allow it. You know how opposed to me all his relatives are. How proud even the doctor himself, although he does not think of those things quite as the rest of his people do, is of his pure, unblemished ancient lineage."

"Alicia, this is madness!"

"No."

"He does not know, he need not know."

"I must tell him."

"That is folly!"

"Father, when one's record is not clear, when one's own mother was a — one must be the more honorable on account of that."

"But, Alicia —"

"Don't! Don't urge me. We look at things in different ways. I have my own ideas of honor. You have yours. I must

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be governed by mine. Don't plead with me, father! Let me respect the only honorable parent I have."

Chalden tore himself from her, put his hand to his head and walked up and down the room in great agitation. Whyot was the one man in Philadelphia he would have chosen for Alicia. And now she was about to reject him! Arguments, appeals rose to his lips, but he decided not to bring them forth then. He would seek a more fitting season, to wait would do no harm, he had often won only by waiting. And there was another thing troubling him.

"Who told you this story?" he finally burst out.

"A man who came to the house this afternoon."

"Yes, but what man?"

"He is in the library," said the girl. Noticing the murderous gleam that sprang into his eyes as he turned away, she exclaimed hurriedly, "You won't hurt him?"

"Hurt him?" cried her father, reach-

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ing up his arms as he spoke and opening and closing his hands with a convulsive motion, a gesture the more sinister because he so rarely permitted himself the luxury of any outward manifestation of his feelings, "I will choke him to death with my naked hands!"

Chalden infrequently gave way to his emotions. To do so was a luxury in which he did not often indulge. He controlled himself and others thereby. His abandonment at this time was the more impressive therefor. If he had had the man before him he would undoubtedly have killed him. Alicia clung to him desperately.

"Father, I will not let you go until you promise me you will not hurt that man! I will stay with you until you promise. There must be some other way to silence him. It is no disgrace to you, and as for me I would rather have it known than have you to — Promise me! I won't let you go until you do!"

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"I can keep him quiet, Alicia. The man is absolutely in my power. He thought to injure me through you, and then escape. He tried to sell his news to Major Whyot this morning; the Major beat him as you see."

"Will's uncle," said the girl, a thrill of pride in the Major's action lighting up her face for a moment.

"Yes, there is good blood in them, even if the little Major has gone to seed. I stopped a raid on his stocks this morning, and he is richer now than he was before."

"That was noble of you. Did he ask you?"

"Certainly not! The man is a gentleman, which in business is tantamount to calling him a fool. I don't understand what Jackens waited for."

"He had to."

"Had to? Why?"

"I made Robert and James keep him until you returned."

"Good! I suppose he has told them?"

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"No, I do not believe he has. From what I saw of Robert's method of dealing with him, I think he has been kept quiet. They would not allow him to speak. You won't hurt him, father? Promise me! You are all I have now. I can't even love the memory of a — mother!"

The girl's voice quivered and broke.

"Alicia," said the man, deeply moved by her touching appeal, "whatever happens to me, whatever you may learn, I want you to believe one thing, that if I have ever done you a wrong I love you as I have never loved woman before. I want you to believe that I think you are worthy the respect, the devotion, of the best of humanity."

"That makes up to me for a great deal. Now, you won't lay your hands on that man, will you? I want that promise, because I have only you now. I could not bear to see you ——"

"I shall not. Now, let me go."

"No, I must go with you. When I

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have told him one thing then I shall leave you."

As the two entered the library Jackens fairly cowered from the sight of Chalden's heavy brow and lowering countenance.

"Oh, for God's sake, sir, Mr. Chalden—" cringed the man.

"Be still!" said the other sharply.

"Robert and James, keep within call outside. Has the man said anything to you?"

"Not a word, sir," answered Robert.

"I wouldn't let him."

"You are a rare and faithful servant, Robert," said Chalden, "and I shall not forget it."

"Yes, sir," replied the man gravely and simply as he went out and closed the door.

It was more praise than Chalden had given him for years. He was one of those who followed the financier's fortune with blind devotion, and in such rare words he found adequate reward.

"Mr. — what is this man's name, father?"

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"Jackens."

"Mr. Jackens, I did you an injustice. I said that you lied. I still think you what I said you were, a heartless villain and a scoundrel, but you are not a liar, and I am sorry I said so."

"Oh, Miss, won't you please ——"

"I do not need to do anything to help you," said Alicia, "except to remind you that we are told to forgive those who trespass against us. You have trespassed against my father and against me sorely," she went on piteously, "but I — we — forgive you."

She included Chalden in her statement, but without permission or justification; one look at his face showed that to Jackens, who writhed under it.

"Oh, Miss, if you will only ——"

"Father has promised me that he will not hurt you, and he always keeps his word. Won't you, father?"

"I will. Now go, Alicia."

Left alone with the man, Chalden

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stepped to him cowering down on the floor before him. His hands fairly twitched to get at him.

"You promised her!" gasped the man in mortal terror.

"And I'll keep my promise," answered the other. "But I think you know how I would like to strangle you. I've just one word to say to you. You told your story to Major Whyot, and he came straight to me with it. Then you told it to my daughter. Have you mentioned it to anyone else?"

"No, sir, so help me God, sir!"

"Well, sir, I've taken occasion to refer to your past and I've learned your career. After you fled from my employ I had detectives put on your track. I knew how you felt, and I wanted to protect myself against all possible attacks from such as you. I've looked your career up from the beginning. I know you to be one of the blackest hearted scoundrels, in a small way, that ever lived. I'm not surprised at your

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attempt to do this. There is evidence enough in my possession to put you in the State prison — for life. I don't know but that there is evidence enough to hang you. That store that was burned down! The women in it. The forgery of my name which I stopped before you could realize anything on it. The abstraction of those bonds. There's murder, arson, theft, forgery! Do you mark that? This is not theory on my part, I have the papers in my office, in my safe. I'm not bluffing.

"You will come down to my office tomorrow at ten o'clock. I want you to be perfectly certain that I have the evidence there, that I can dispose of you as I wish, that I can hang you, or at least imprison you for life. Then I want you to know that if you ever open your mouth about that story, or about me, or mine, in any way, so help me your God — if you believe in any — that moment you betray me I will fix you. I am rich enough to keep you in sight forever. If you are not at my office

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to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, a warrant will be issued for you immediately. You are a marked man already. Do you know what I did as soon as you left me yesterday? I telephoned the Director of Public Safety to cause you to be apprehended and brought to me. There is the telephone ringing now," continued Chalden, as the bell jangled from the desk. He picked up the receiver.

"Yes," he answered, "this is Mr. Chalden. Ah, the Director of Public Safety. Yes, you have found the man? You traced him to my house this afternoon, and you report that he has not been seen to leave it." Chalden lifted his head. "Come here, my man. I want you to hear for yourself. Now, take that receiver. I want you to be perfectly sure that I am stating the truth. You see," he added, as the frightened wretch put down the receiver, "now you have your choice. I'll telephone the Police Department now that you are here and they are to follow you

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after you leave and not let you get away. You understand that I have only to lift my hand and you are done for. You can decide by ten o'clock to-morrow morning whether your life and liberty are worth more to you than the telling of this tale. If I had not promised that girl that I would not hurt you, you would never leave this house alive. Now go! Remember what I've said and be at my office at ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

"I may not be admitted, sir."

"Yes, you will. Here is a card. I will leave instructions there for your reception."

"But don't I get any money?" whined the abject man.

"Not a dollar, not a cent! You may count yourself lucky in getting out alive. Robert," said Chalden, as that person entered in answer to the bell, "show this man to the door."

After the man had gone Chalden sat down at the desk and laid his face upon it.

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The sweat had come out upon his forehead, although the room was cold. He brushed it away from his haggard brow. He looked years older, he was almost as shaken in body and spirit as if he had had a stroke.

"My God," he murmured, "my God, what an escape! If she only knew!"

XIII

ALICIA had instantly made up her mind to break her engagement with Doctor Whyot.

The girl was intensely proud. Without saying much about it, scarcely even realizing it, she had been as proud of her good name, of her ancestry, as the Major of his; in a different way, but as strongly as he. She discovered that when she found she had no reason to be. It had been more or less an unconscious pride; just as she had taken her ancestry for granted, from her self-consciousness, so she had fitted herself into the imaginary situation. The crushing shock of the discovery of her mother's infamy, her father's flight, the change of name, the years in a foreign city, and so on, swept her away from her usual moorings. She felt lost in the situation which confronted her. There was

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nothing in her experience or in her theories of life which would adequately enable her to rise above it.

In a perfect agony of shame and humiliation, with a heart-break for the blight that had come so suddenly and unexpectedly upon her, she sat down and wrote to her lover. She told him the naked truth, and then, after declaring her surprise and horror at the facts, which, she assured him, she had not known until that night, she peremptorily broke the engagement.

Never, she said, would she consent to allow the anticipated marriage to take place. While he was greatly different from the rest of his family, yet she realized, and gladly, that he was by no means free from a proper amount of that pride of birth and ancestry which his family exhibited so extravagantly. They had often spoken together of the privilege and the joy of an untarnished name, an unblemished character, and a pure ancestry.

In view of what she had learned, in view

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of the fact that the name she bore was not her rightful one, in view of the possibility, nay, the certainty, that sooner or later the whole disgraceful story would come out, she could not consent that the engagement should continue. She could not marry him, she could never marry anyone, with such a cloud upon her.

She made no secret of her love for the man; indeed, it was impossible to disguise it. In the very act of renunciation, her devotion, in despite of her mind, shone clear and true and strong. The sentences with which she said good-by rang more passionately than any she had ever written or spoken to him. Because it was the last time, she abandoned herself to her feelings, and they overwhelmed her.

It was a noble letter, and Alicia was a noble person. Her sense of honor was keen, and deeply engrained in her being. She prayed, after she had posted the letter, that Whyot might not call upon her that evening. The strain of telling him

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face to face what she had written would have been more than she could have borne, and love gave Alicia insight enough to know that her own person would be the most potent argument in preventing that cool and dispassionate consideration of her resolution which she demanded of her lover. Alicia was absolutely determined upon her course of action. The strong, masterful, forceful traits of her father appeared in her character in curious streaks. Generally amenable to argument, appeal, persuasion, she sometimes exhibited a determination — her enemies might have called it an obstinacy — which amounted to impenetrable hardness.

Her heart was fairly breaking over the sad end she foresaw to her love affair, yet she never for a moment contemplated an alteration in her decision. As to what Dr. Whyot would do she could not tell. She hoped — that was the woman of it — that he might refuse to accept her renunciation of him and that he might come to

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plead with her later on, when she had in a measure recovered from the trials of the day. In that case, however, she was firmly resolved that she would never give way. She would never go to him as a wife unless she could feel herself in every respect his equal.

This confounding herself with her ancestry was a distinctly unphilosophic view for a Doctor of Philosophy to take, yet she took it. It ran counter to her theories of the inherent equality of individuals, but she did not hesitate on that account. She believed, for others, that each man made his own place, and was to be judged on his own merits; but she could not make her theory fit her own case. The best of us are creatures of contradiction, men as well as women. Alicia resolved to break her engagement, in contravention of her theories of life; yet she wished her lover to come to her, to appeal to her, to plead with her, in defiance of her inhibition. She said to him, "Come no more," and if he did not

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come, though he came upon a fruitless errand, her heart would break!

Yes, Alicia believed with all her soul in the essential equality of individuals, no matter what the several accidents of birth, color, or station, might be. Yet she took upon herself the sins of her mother and created thereby an inequality between herself and the rest of the world — that is, Doctor Whyot. Strange and illogical conclusion for a Doctor of Philosophy, but before she earned that good degree, and after as well, she was yet a woman. A woman in all but her resolution.

Alicia was very unhappy. She slept not at all that night. Her cheeks burned against the pillow as she thought of the shame in what should be to the child the very fount of altruism and pure affection, her mother. With morbid sensitiveness she felt the taint of evil in her, as if she had herself been guilty.

Her thoughts dwelt often upon her father. There was comfort there. How

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noble, how good, he had been! No wonder he was embittered toward society. No wonder he had made war upon it and mastered it. No wonder he had withdrawn himself from the world awhile. He had done it from the impulse of a poignant and never dying memory. But now he had changed. Not in his methods, or in his manners, or in his practice, perhaps — men do not change the habits of years in a moment, unless under the inspiration of a great catastrophe or in the presence of a crisis — but he had changed his object. He was working and gathering for her now.

She forgot, in the rush of her new affection, other things that had begun to hurt her. It was pitiful from one point of view, but she clung the more desperately to the honorable position of her father now that she had been stricken so sorely on the maternal side. She shut her eyes to the things which had moved her so profoundly, which had gone far to open her eyes to the true

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inwardness of some of her father's actions. Her being went out to him in a wave of affection which, had the lonely man below, sitting in the library, quiet and still, staring at nothing with relief and terror yet in his face, comprehended, might have deepened his relief while it added to his terror and, in spite of all, filled his heart with joy.

Well, Alicia would devote herself to her father, to her work. Perhaps God had marked her out in this way by making it impossible for her to enjoy the earthly happiness which in the morning had been her fondest dream. She would work among the poor people who already looked to her as the chief among those who were to lead them into higher planes of living and thought. What was her loss should be their gain. She would send for Mr. Olney in the morning. There was a scheme, dear to his heart, from which she had hitherto shrunk, it demanded so much personal service of her, but she would now

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espouse it with earnestness, with gladness.

Yet it was, after all, a miserable girl who came to this noble conclusion.

Morning brought no comfort either to the broken girl or to the man who looked as if he had escaped death by the shading of a hair. Because they were creatures of convention they went through the usual routine of life. One must eat and drink, if one cannot be merry, though death be in the house or shame in the heart. Each concealed from the other how deep had been the hurt and strove to put on a semblance of cheerfulness. Alicia was loath to part with her father that morning. She sent him to his office with the memory of a clinging embrace and a fervent kiss hanging about him. Those made the situation, the real situation, the harder to bear.

Chalden found Jackens waiting for him, and easily convinced that cringing and thoroughly terrorized mortal of the indisputable character of the evidence in his

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possession. When the ex-clerk left the office of his former employer there was no fear on Chalden's part that the man would ever cause him further trouble — at least not until his death. There was some little satisfaction for Chalden in this manifestation of power. Power is power, whether it is wielded against the helpless or the strong. Even the crushing of a mere weakling is not without pleasure to the man who crushes it, provided he has the crushing spirit.

But Chalden had been greatly shocked by the whole affair. If this man had at last found out what he believed he had taken such successful steps to prevent ever coming to light, others might do the same. They might do more. The security in which he had lived was gone in a moment. That was Chalden's weakness; to imagine that anything in his past, in the past of a man of such prominence as he, could be forever concealed.

And there was another phase of Chal-

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den's life the opening of which would have moved him to vastly greater sorrow than the discovery of the misconduct of his wife. For the first time in years the man was unable to concentrate himself upon his work. There is always business of moment to demand the attention of a great financier, and for the first time he felt inadequate to it. He dismissed his secretary to the outer office, refusing himself to all callers on the plea of urgent private affairs, and sat moodily alone in front of his great desk. His attitude was singularly like that assumed by one who expected a blow. A premonition of disaster was in the air. He waited.

Doctor Whyot received Alicia's letter just as he was leaving his office to attend a confinement case of great urgency. He read it standing on his door step. His first impulse was to go to her instantly, but the poor woman to whose bedside he was called required immediate attention. The shock of the letter was so great that he

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hardly felt equal to the responsibilities of the case, which he had reason to believe would prove serious, yet his pride instantly came to his rescue and his sense of duty. The woman suffering bodily pain must first receive attention, the poor woman who required his professional services had the first claim. The woman who was suffering from heart-break must wait. Always, everywhere, the woman who suffers from heart-break must wait. A cut finger takes precedence over a bruised soul even.

Whyot summoned his resolution to his aid and determined to do his duty as a physician, under the appeal made by a profession which exacts from its followers the devotion of a priest, the consecration of a martyr, the labor of a serf. Alicia must wait.

He scribbled a hasty note on his prescription tablet to the Major, with whom he had striven to keep on terms of speech at least during the period which had elapsed since the famous dinner, asking

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him to meet him early in the afternoon at the Loyal Club, to which he promised to repair as soon as he could get free from his duties. For, on second thoughts, he concluded that he must see the Major before Alicia. He did not trust himself to answer Alicia's letter, but pencilling a line upon another tablet blank told her he had received her letter and begged her to remain at her own home until he appeared, as he had an imperative call of duty which prevented his coming to her at once. The letter closed with the assurance that the girl craved, that he did not love her for her family, her ancestry, but for herself.

She was fully determined, and, realizing her determination, it would have been better for her to avoid him; yet, after she had read it, she carefully remained at home during the morning, waiting. There the Reverend Henry Olney found her, a prey to nervousness and agitation and sorrow vastly greater than her power of concealment.

XIV

WHEN the Reverend Henry Olney's card was put in Alicia's hand a sudden flash of memory brought back her father's strange remark of the afternoon before. She had forgotten it in the rush of events, and now she wondered vaguely what he might have meant by the reference. Was it possible that the clergyman knew the shameful story which had been revealed to her? If so, how had he found it out? How long had he known it? Her father had always spoken in detestation of him. His coming to the house, especially since Aunt Nancy's death, had been a distinct concession to her desires on Chalden's part. So far as she knew there had been no intercourse between her father and Olney of any sort, yet the first thought evidently that had come into Chalden's mind

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when she had told him the story was that either the Major or Olney had been her informants. While the reference to the Major had been accounted for, that to Olney had not. What did Olney know, was the question which confronted her with his card.

A strange feeling of resentment came over her. She could hardly express why she felt this resentment, at least a frank explanation would have involved an abandonment of her sociological position of inherent equality in individuals, which she still maintained except so far as Whyot and herself were affected by these new developments; yet there was the fact that she did resent any knowledge of her private affairs by a man who, from his mixed blood, she instinctively felt, in spite of her theories, to belong to an inferior race. Alicia at that moment was a living protest against her theory — and for the second time.

It did not then occur to her that in the

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end the discovery of such a secret in her father's past would be inevitable, and that when it was published it would be known to everyone, high and low, black and white. Her world at that particular instant was limited to Olney, and him she did not wish to know it. If the story were published broadcast no doubt there would be something to dull the anguish of her consciousness in the very publicity which would be given it. If everybody knew it the worst would be over, but to have a man whom she had unconsciously and unwittingly dominated know it was unbearable. She only considered that domination in his case — Olney approached so nearly her own racial status that she instinctively armed herself against him. She never troubled her head or her heart about such questions when she was brought in contact with the lower classes of negroes — and to have that secret known to Olney, to feel herself an object of his pity — It was intolerable!

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She did not feel that way about Doctor Whyot at all. . She wanted his pity because she loved him, and she expected it because he loved her, although all was at an end between them. However, Alicia realized that speculations concerning Olney and herself were not profitable, and if the man did know that secret which was crushing her he was in no way responsible for the knowledge and could not honestly be held accountable therefor by any right-minded person. She did him the justice to acknowledge that he had never presumed upon such knowledge in any way — if he had it — and that, although for the first time she fairly admitted it to herself, or took open cognizance of the fact, that he was in love with her, he had never in any way borne himself save with the most respectful decorum; that he had been, in short, a self-repressing, self-respecting gentleman in all his intercourse with her.

These things did not give her any great amount of comfort, but they forced her to

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endeavor to put all such vagrant ideas out of her mind and to receive him precisely as she was accustomed to do. Moreover, on one account she was anxious to see him. The breaking of her engagement, the new determination to throw herself with more vigor and energy into her chosen work, the necessity she felt for his guidance, the hoped for benefit of his wise assistance, should have rendered him, and did, save for the thoughts she had, a most opportune visitor.

She was sitting in the library at the time, and she gave orders at last that he should be admitted. Had it been Doctor Whyot whom she expected to open the door she would have given instant thought to her appearance. Indeed, had Alicia been a girl of wider acquaintance among men, and had she expected anyone of her own class, she would have considered her looks in spite of everything. With Olney it was different. He was a clergyman and — well, at any rate she gave no thought to

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her appearance. She did not even exert herself to banish the evidences of her grief and despair.

The man saw her therefore entirely disarmed, off her guard, indifferent. Even an ordinary observer would have marked the signs of that sorrow which had changed her outlook upon life over night and had settled upon her as a blight. An eye as keen as Olney's, backed by an intellect as subtle, instigated by a heart as passionate, with that touch of oriental fineness of perception, which came from that little streak of sun-kissed tropic blood, saw very much more.

The whole woman in her anguish and agony was revealed to him. He could have borne her joy, he had schooled himself to contemplate her happiness without manifesting one jot of his feelings, but her grief moved him beyond his power of control. Yesterday she had been the personification of youth, of hope, of freedom from care; to-day it was as if a cloud had

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been drawn around her horizon. Her pale face was whiter than ever. The passion, the touch of life, had gone from it. There were circles under her eyes, the very droop of her figure, the slow turn of her head as she lifted her eyes to meet his glance, bespoke some crushing blow. He could see that it was not physical, that some mental shock had robbed her of the joy of life.

"Good heavens!" he cried. "Miss Chalden, what has happened.

He stepped nearer to her in his anxiety, nearer than he had ever approached her. She noticed his long graceful fingers twined together and clinched as if they would break from the pressure. They made a white tremulous blur in front of his long black clerical coat.

"What is the matter?" he cried.

"I — I —"

She stopped. How much did this man know? Could she ascertain without betraying herself? She would try.

"Why do you ask?"

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"You look — forgive me — so — broken."

The man's voice quivered with his anxiety. Alicia's eyes opened. His guard was off, too. She was looking into his soul as he was looking into her own. There was no doubt of his feelings now. The touch of sorrow had enlightened them both. To love, to suffer together, is it not at last to see, sometimes to believe? She would be careful. She answered him evenly:

"I am very well."

"Yes, physically, perhaps, but something has happened. Tell me. What is it? I must know!"

His imperative manner shocked her, there was a sense of equality, nay, mastery, in it. The girl drew herself up with a flash of pride, a pride that she had never before exhibited in intercourse with him, for there had been no occasion for it.

"Why do you ask?" she cried sharply.

"What right ——"

"The right of ——" the man burst out

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hotly, and then stopped and bit his pale lip until the blood reddened it. "No right," he said at last, humbly, "none whatever. I beg your pardon." He passed his hand wearily across his brow as if to drive away thought by the mere physical pressure. "I forgot myself," he added. He moved back a few paces from her. "I pray your pardon. I have had much on my mind of late. I have become nervous, overwrought, unstrung ——"

He wondered dimly in his agony whether he had completely betrayed himself or not. His distress was so terrible that the girl pitied him.

"You may ask," she said finally. "I have heard something ——"

She looked steadily at him. How like her father in her intent gaze, he thought, as he returned her look unflinchingly.

"I have heard something that — that disgraces me."

"Miss Chalden," he cried at once, keenly alive, as he thought, to the situa-

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tion, "say no more, I beg of you. I am no fit confidant for you. Your father, your *fiancé* — do not tell me anything that you would regret."

As he spoke there came into his mind a vivid apprehension that she had learned the secret that he possessed, that Aunt Nancy had told him, and from his soul he pitied her. Yet, in that he was a human man with the human passions of his kind, he could not restrain a leap of wild exultation in his heart. Had she discovered what he had concealed at the risk of his life, could she be made to recognize the depth of his love in his self-sacrifice for her? He fought these things down like the gentleman he was. He strove to be conscious only of the fact that the knowledge he possessed, if she shared it, would kill her. Perhaps the blow had already been inflicted; yet there was not quite evidence enough for that in her appearance. It could not be that, surely. It was only a surmise naturally on his part, but still a

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surmise. There might be other dark periods in the hidden life of Philip Chalden, things bad enough, but beside that of little moment. He must be careful. He must watch himself. The man clinched his hands once more and waited.

"You are a clergyman," said Alicia slowly. "I believe you to be an honorable man. Something tells me that — that — what I have to tell you is already known to you."

The man was under too great a pressure for any mental contradiction. Something flashed into his face, sorrow for her, joy for himself. The girl leaned forward and stared at him. She extended her hand toward him.

"I know that you know," she said triumphantly. "Don't you? You shall tell me!" she continued, her voice rising a little. "Do you know anything?"

"Stop, stop!" he answered, putting out his hand.

She brushed it aside.

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"Do you know anything —" her voice lost its sweetness in its commanding insistence — "do you know anything about my mother?"

The man shrank away from her. At this moment he would have given his life cheerfully to spare her. He tried to speak. His voice died away in his agony. His lips were parched and dry. He moistened them nervously, turned away his head, and lied to her.

"No," he whispered hoarsely, "I —"

"Don't lie to me. You are a clergyman, a priest of God, sworn to honor, honesty, a follower in your Master's footsteps. I have watched you. I believe you to be a true man, one of the few with whom I have come in contact. Tell me the truth. I adjure you in the name of the God we both serve, do you know any — disgraceful secret — about — my mother?"

"I do," answered the man, compelled, bowing to a will stronger than his own; and then he buried his face in his thin,

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slender hands and his body shook with suppressed feeling.

She knew then, God help her, he thought. He was mistaken, and never was mistake more fatal in its consequences. As yet she had no suspicion of the real truth.

"Why, why did you ask me?" he cried, as soon as he could speak. "Why did you force me to tell you? Good God, have you no mercy, no pity? I have known it since the old woman died. Believe me, I did not seek the knowledge. She saw that I — I —"

What was the Reverend Henry Olney about to say? Before her surprised yet suspicious gaze he stopped. By an effort that tore his very soul he checked himself in time.

"She told me. I swear to you on my honor as a man, by my vows as a priest, that I never told it to a soul except to your father! I would not have done so. You can't think how awful this has been to me.

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When the woman told me it opened before me such a vista of hope, I can't express it. But there, that is over."

He lifted his face from his hands, and the haggardness and misery in it more than matched her own. He suffered for two — for Alicia and himself; she only suffered for herself, then.

"Forgive me," he went on; "I have made a fool of myself. I do not know how I came to do it. The knowledge is awful to you, but — well, it hasn't made any difference in your regard for me, I see that, and I thought, I hoped, it might — if you ever learned it."

The girl was staring at the man wide-eyed, astonished. What could he mean?

"I saw it in your eyes as I came in," he continued blindly. "I watched you. For one moment I hoped — but that is over. I want to serve you and I want to help you. No one can understand your position as I."

A vague fear of something yet unre-

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vealed and more terrible had penetrated the girl's soul as she listened to the passionate outburst. Had fate something worse in store for her than the blows already inflicted upon her?

"You understand?" she asked slowly.
"What do you understand? Why ——"

"I understand, yes," said the man;
"don't you see? I know."

"Know what?"

"My mother also ——"

"Was she an adulteress, a suicide like mine?"

"She was an adulteress," said the man bitterly, "like many octoroons, yes; a suicide, no."

His words seemed to turn the girl to stone. She stood before him absolutely motionless. An octoroon — what could he mean? She was staring at him, and the surprise this time was with him. She did not know, she had not known, then. Just heaven! What had he done? What had she known or thought? Had he betrayed

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— the girl was speaking. He could not hear what she was saying even at the distance he stood. He stepped nearer to her. She swayed unsteadily before him. He grasped her by the arm.

"An octeroon!" she whispered. "Was my mother a — negress as well as —"

"Good God!" cried Olney in a voice tense with all the horror of the discovery of his error, "didn't you know?"

"No. Is it the truth?"

"It's a lie," answered the man promptly. "I am mad! I don't know what I said."

"It's the truth!" cried the girl, "and I am even as you — tainted! Black! Black! My God! My God!"

"Forgive me," exclaimed Olney desperately, falling at her feet, clutching her dress in his hand, "I thought you knew. I should have died rather than — what am I saying? It's a lie! I know nothing."

"You love me," said the girl swiftly, "and you know. Aunt Nancy told you."

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It made me like yourself. It brought me in reach of you. You could hope, and yet you kept silent and saw me give myself to another man."

"No," persisted the man doggedly, "I know nothing."

"An octoroon! — Oh, not that! Yes, say it was a lie, a lie!" cried Alicia in a heart-breaking appeal. "Why, my mother was as white as —" she was about to say as I am — "as any woman. She was wicked, disgraceful, she abandoned me, she ran away from my father, with his dearest friend. He shot the man dead, and my mother committed suicide and left me a baby, a little white baby. She was an adulteress, she was everything that she should not have been — oh, for God's sake, don't say she was a negress!"

The girl was wild with terror now. She looked down at the man kneeling at her feet and stretched out her hands to him.

"Don't tell me that!" she cried.

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"I will not," said the man, resolutely persistent, hoping against hope that he might undo his betrayal, rectify his awful mistake. "What you have said is true, and that's all of it. Your mother was white, of course. That's what old Nancy told me. I lied to you a moment ago. I tried to make you believe that you were even as I — that I might hope — that I might love you — that you might return my affection. I worship the ground upon which you walk. I lay my soul at your feet. It has been there ever since I saw you. I am a man, that accursed streak of black blood has not altered me, changed me, and but for that I might have won you. At least I'd have had a chance like other men. It made me crazy, and I gave way to the temptation just now. Hate me, despise me, I have lied to you, I am a forsworn man. I have been false to my ordination vows, my honor as a man — to everything! I have thrown them aside for you."

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And so he had, but in a different way from that conveyed in his speech.

"No, no," said the girl, overwhelmed by her consciousness of the bitter truth, "you are telling an untruth now. I know you, even despite yourself." His heart leaped with joy at the testimony to his rectitude that she had unconsciously given him. "I know you better than yourself," she went on. "She was a negress, and I ——"

"Oh, do not," he interrupted in a last appeal. "Dismiss all this from your mind. The fault is mine. Would God I had died before I came here!"

"And would God that I might now if it be true!"

"It is not. I swear to you ——"

"Stop! Do not perjure yourself further. I am going to one who knows, from whom I can get the truth."

"And that is?"

"My father!"

XV

THE big clock in the office was just striking twelve. Philip Chalden had been waiting all morning for the blow to fall, and upon the mid-day stroke of the clock it came. Alicia entered the office without ceremony of any sort. He had carried in his mind all morning her miserable face, which, in spite of her efforts to be cheerful, had been so heart-broken, but the sorrow he had seen and remembered was nothing to the anguish that appeared on her countenance now.

With scrupulous care she closed the heavy doors that barred the way to the private room in which he sat. They were double, and so arranged as effectually to conceal whatever went on inside that room. Not a sound could penetrate through them to the other side of the partition. There were many things that happened in that

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office that Philip Chalden would not have allowed anyone to hear. The father and daughter were as alone, so far as sight and hearing were concerned, as if they had been in a desert.

"Alicia," exclaimed Chalden, as the girl stood and looked at him with a burning, awful glance. "What is the matter? What has brought you here? Has anything happened?"

The girl's hand went to her throat. She struggled for a moment, and then she gasped out, in a voice which was so filled with suffering and so foreign to her usual speech that had her auditor been blind he could have marked her agony:

"Was my mother a negress?"

The question was so unexpected, so direct, that it stunned him. Alicia read her doom sentence in the look that leaped into his eye, the nervous shudder that shook his frame. He strove as never before to collect himself, to think of some reply which would avoid confession.

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"Answer! My God, last night you told me that she was only an adulteress, that was a lie! I want the truth now! That woman's baby that she abandoned? It died?"

He knew that he was beaten. He was compelled to answer by the girl's imperious, insistent demand. The time for lies had gone — only the truth could pass current now.

"That baby died?" she insisted.

He bowed his head.

"When?"

"Almost immediately."

"Ah, would God I had been she!"

"Alicia —" began the old man.

"Don't touch me. Don't come near me! My mother?"

"She was my wife's maid — an — octoroon; she had been in our family from childhood. Her forebears had been my father's slaves. There was good blood in her veins — our own. The — other baby died in Italy. I — she —"

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The man hung his head. For the first time in his life he could not look enemy or friend in the face. The sweat stood out on his forehead. Alicia gazed pitilessly.

"The other baby?"

"You were born a few months after her death. And — ah — your mother died when you were born."

"Had you married her?"

"Married an oc —" cried Chalden, and then he stopped.

"I see," said Alicia, "being a white man you could not marry a woman like my — my mother. What is my name?"

"Avery is mine."

"But mine?"

"Alicia, Alicia!" groaned the man, "why do you press me this way?"

"I have no right to your name; I suppose I might be called after my mother."

"They were slaves in my father's family. They called themselves Avery."

"Why didn't you tell me? Why, in

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God's name, did you pass me off as a white woman? As your child?"

"You were my child."

"Yes, I know, but as your lawful child. Why did you bring me up as a white woman only that I should learn what I am now? You didn't love me. I can't remember in all my life that you ever showed the least affection for me until after I graduated."

"Alicia, I love you now."

"Yes, but not before. Why did you do it?"

"My God!" gasped the man. "You kill me with your questions!"

"I must have an answer! It's my right."

"I hated society. After the death of my — my wife, and the killing of my friend, I wanted to get away from it. I had loved that woman ——"

"My mother?"

"No, no, the other woman, my wife."

Alicia shrank as if from a blow.

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"I loved her, as I told you last night, more than my very soul, and when she betrayed me, and with my best friend whom I had trusted, I went mad. You will have the truth. I became a human brute, an animal. I took the baby and Nancy and Alice away with me."

"Alice? This other woman, my mother —"

"Yes, yes. She was beautiful in her own way — you know the rest."

"And this is my father?"

"You would have the story," he went on desperately, his only possible hope being in making a clean breast of it now. "I brought you up in ignorance of your birth. I wanted to use you as my revenge against society. To make you as wise as you were beautiful, as wealthy as you were wise. I thought that you would be a success from the beginning. I wanted to marry you to the best and highest in the land, and then — well, I don't know what then. I intended to use you as my jest, but I did not

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in the end. Because I began to love you. I am frank, I am telling you the truth now. I tried to think otherwise, but in vain. When you had scarlet fever I was nearly frantic lest you should die. I tried to make myself believe that it was because I feared to lose my — my revenge on society. I know now it wasn't that. I loved you. Since you have returned from college and we have been thrown together — Alicia, Alicia, I didn't love my wife of long ago as I love you now.

“Don't shrink away from me! You are all I have. I've won the world, I can buy what I please, but there isn't a single thing on earth that loves me, unless you will forgive me. Think of me. I was horribly treated. I was mad. I was stricken in everything that men hold most dear. I was a brute, an animal, a fiend, a devil, call me what you will! But now I am different. I am ashamed. Alicia, I'm your father. I have not been good to you, but I will make up to you now. I love you.

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You don't know how rich I am, how able I am. I want to make reparation. You wouldn't realize if I told you, but I — we have money enough to buy anything under heaven. You and Doctor Whyot —

"He is nothing to me now. I could not marry him. I can never marry any man on the face of God's earth."

"Why not? I have the material powers of the world at my — at your command. I can make you a duchess, a princess. I might even buy you a throne."

"You cannot make me a white woman."

"You are white now. Just a trace of —"

"Just what Mr. Olney has."

"The infernal hound!" cried her father. "He must have told you! He broke his word!"

"He could not help it. He came to see me this morning. He saw I was in trouble. I told him. You gave me the clew last night when you asked me if he had told

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me the other. I told what I had learned about my mother, and then it all came out. He is innocent."

"The black scoundrel!" he exclaimed. "I would like ——"

"Stop! What you call him you call me. We are alike."

"Well, suppose he does know," pleaded her father. "I can buy his silence or ——"

"You mistake him. He wouldn't tell. Tortures could not wring it from him, but if it were proper for him to proclaim it you could not buy his silence and you could not force it. Perhaps that's his black honor. There are some things that your money can't buy."

"I have not found them."

"Then I'll tell you what they are. One is self-respect. To pass myself off for a white woman for another day — I would rather die! It is not my fault that I am black. I could not help it. It's yours; but that I should exist a false pretence an-

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other moment, I shall not do it! Why, as I rode down in the carriage I wanted to scream at the top of my voice, 'I'm black, I'm black!' The hoofs of the horses beat out the words on the pavement. The people who looked at me seemed to be crying it in my face ——"

"Oh, God!" cried the old man, appalled at this display of frantic passion, although her voice scarcely rose above its ordinary tones.

"Everybody shall know it! I will conceal it no longer from anyone. The truth shall be known, the truth that kills me, and shames you. All the money and power on earth could not make me love you. There is one other thing you cannot buy."

"What is that?"

"Love," said the girl; "I hate you, I loathe you! I do not know where I get the power to feel this way. My mother was an ex-slave, my father is a liar, a brute, a blackguard! Why should I care?"

She flung the mordant words at him in

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a quiet, low voice that cut him like a lash, such contempt there was in them.

"With such an ancestry I ought to be willing to take anything, to do anything, disgraceful. I ought to allow you to buy me title, fame, place, and race, and I ought to appreciate a character like yours. But I don't; I despise you, I curse God that you are my father, and if I have power I shall never look upon your face again. You have had your revenge, not on society, but on me, a woman, with your own blood in my veins, a woman who had learned to love you, who has lain on your breast, whom you called daughter. There is no depth of hatred so deep that you do not fill it in my eyes. That's all. I am going now."

"Don't, don't!" cried the man. "All that you say is true. But give me another chance! I have been bad, you can make me better. I was good once, you can bring it out again. I will tell the truth, mine be the shame, yours the honor; we will go

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away together. All that I have is yours — no, not to buy you, but for yourself to do what you will, to do good with. Bear with me. It won't be for long. This will kill me. Have mercy!"

"I am going now," she returned monotonously, as deaf to his appeal as if he had not spoken.

"Where are you going?"

"To my own people!"

"Alicia! Alicia!"

She wrenched herself from his detaining hands, flung open the door, and in a moment she was gone.

XVI

IT was half after one o'clock before Doctor Whyot's buggy dashed up to the steps of the Loyal Club. He had not been able to leave the case which had so inopportunately demanded his services until a few moments before. He felt that he had given enough evidence of his devotion to science in his morning sacrifice, and resolutely postponing attendance upon other calls, more or less pressing, he had driven post-haste to the club.

In that rapid drive, and so far as he could during the conduct of the case, he had formed his plan. He intended to show Alicia's letter to the Major, to beg him as a gentleman to look at the situation from the younger man's point of view. That, whereas, before it had been a case of love, it had now become a question of honor as

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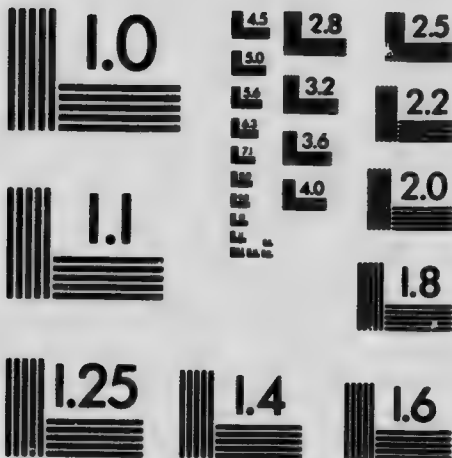
well. He hoped the Major would see things as he did and that he would not only withdraw his opposition to the marriage, but would actually join him in pleading with Alicia.

Whyot had made no mistake about the letter. He knew, as no one else did, the strength of Alicia's character. Here was no declaration of an overwrought, hysterical woman who wanted to be coaxed. Her firmness and intensity of purpose spoke to him in the letter. He realized that he would have to fight, and fight desperately, for her love, and he intended to crave, nay, to demand, the assistance of the Major. He was not indifferent to the shock of the declaration, he was just as proud in his way as his uncle was in his of his clean ancestry, and was just as grieved at the revelation Alicia made to him as anyone could have been. He was a just man, though he was wildly in love. It made a difference to him, but the difference, after all, was trifling. He told himself that he



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did not care what she was, what her ancestry — which was not true, but it was a good enough theory upon which to work.

The Major received him with rather more warmth than usual. It was some days since he had seen his nephew, to whom he was devotedly attached, and of whom he was secretly proud, even of his success in his profession. If he would be a doctor, the Major was glad that he was a good one,¹ and the old man sorrowfully marked the pain and agitation on his nephew's face. His greeting, therefore, was distinctly cordial.

"William Penn," he began — the Major always began all conversations in which he took part; it was due him to take the initiative, and he always took it — "William Penn, you look troubled. What's the matter? You have been working too hard."

"Yes, Uncle Anthony, I have just handled a difficult case."

"Were you successful with it?"

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"I think so. Yes, the woman is doing well and — but, sir, that is not what I wanted — I — Uncle Anthony, I come to appeal to you, and first of all I will ask you to read that."

"That" was Alicia's letter. The Major put on his eye-glasses and read it carefully. His nephew noticed that he manifested no surprise at the contents.

"Um —" he said, handing it back.

"You do not seem surprised, Uncle."

"I am not."

"Why not?"

"I knew it all yesterday."

"You knew it?"

"Yes. A blackmailing scoundrel came to me yesterday morning and told me the story. I went at once to Mr. Chalden and told him."

"You went to him?"

"Yes, and, William Penn Whyot, let me say to you right now, and I don't want you to insinuate, even in your mind, that I went there with any object of — er —

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checking the raid which I am informed Mr. Chalden had inaugurated on my stock in the — ah ———”

“Uncle Anthony, I know you too well to dream for a moment that you would think of such a thing.”

“Precisely. It takes a gentleman to appreciate a gentleman. As to that letter, I call it a very proper letter indeed. The young lady has shown herself to be possessed of — er — the instincts of — ah — good society. She has my respect and admiration for her resolute and — er — heroic action.”

“I am glad to hear you say that, for it makes my request easier for you to grant.”

“What is your request, sir?”

“I want you to go with me immediately to her father and formally ask of him the honor of his daughter's hand in marriage.”

“What!” gasped out the little Major.
“Marriage to me?”

“Of course not, marriage to me. Then, when we have received his consent, I want

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you to go with me to Alicia and add your pleas to mine."

"Why, damn it!" cried the Major, "I told Chalden yesterday that the marriage had been bad enough before, but now it was impossible. Not only are they people with whom we cannot afford to ally ourselves, but — ah — the girl's ancestry is not even respectable! I feel rather sorry for Chalden, but that doesn't alter the case one bit."

"Nevertheless, Uncle, you must go with me."

"Preposterous, sir!"

"I tell you, sir, that it was a matter of love alone before, now it is a matter of honor, in addition. I value our family more than you think, sir, but, after all, I am not marrying the girl for her ancestry. I tell you, I know her! There doesn't live a nobler, purer, better woman on the face of the earth!"

"Stop!" cried the Major; "that's what they all say."

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"This letter proves it. She didn't wait a moment to set me free."

"She knows you won't accept."

"She honors me if she believes that. I do not deny that it makes a difference, but it doesn't diminish my affection for her, and it binds her to me with the claims of sorrow and trouble. Uncle, I appeal to you. You are nice on the point of honor. I know of no man more tender on the question of honor and duty. I am a man of full age, accustomed to think for myself, with the responsibilities of my profession before me. It is my solemn conviction that it is my duty, as it is my happiness, to insist upon this engagement and to marry this girl."

"Suppose it comes out?"

"Let it come. No one will dare question the status of my wife. She'll be one of us, a Whyot, then," he smiled faintly. "You must help me. As a gentleman, sir, I appeal to you. Your course toward Chalden, I have heard of it from Mr. Bul-

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don, was noble, magnanimous to the point of Quixotism. You had him in your power, you spared him when you hated him. Match that action with another. Oh, be moved! Shake off this prejudice of race that sometimes, I think, has paralyzed the energies of our latest generations ———"

"William Penn," interrupted the Major warningly.

He was strangely swayed by the young man's appeal, and his nephew, seeing that, would not be stayed.

"Think of that poor girl. Think of her alone with Chalden. Think of her life with the consciousness of this," putting the paper before the Major again, "cankering in her soul! As you are a gentleman, nay, a man, as you have loved me, indulge me in this. Go with me. Let us see Mr. Chalden, and, backed by his consent, let us go to Alicia. It all depends upon you. You represent that for which Alicia has drawn back. You are, as it were, the voice

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of society to her, and when you speak it will have weight. I tell you frankly that if I go alone I know what the answer will be. I shall be unable to shake her resolution, but with you, I feel, I do believe — I have no assurance, but I hope — and aside from all this, I love her. Didn't you ever feel yourself, when you were younger, a passion for a woman that consumed you, that made you think that life without her would be useless? I do not wish to inflict upon you these things, but I love her, I tell you! I do not care what she is, or from what she comes, her people, anything — I know only that I love her! She has grown into my heart, she is bound up in my life. I am asking you for everything that man holds dear, by our relationship, by your love and affection for me, by the honorable instincts of our race, to help me. Will you do it?"

"By Jove!" cried the Major, wiping his glasses suspiciously, "it is against my principles. I think just as I always have,

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but, by gad, William Penn, I will! You have the good Whyot blood in you, after all. Honor, even family prestige, must give way to it. The girl's done nobly. I will help you win her, and together we will protect her. Society in Philadelphia takes its cue from me. When she marries you she becomes a Whyot, and she's beautiful enough, and, if that letter indicates her character, good enough, to be allowed the title."

That was a great concession on the part of the Major.

"Thank you," said William Penn gratefully. "Now, let us go at once."

"Dismiss your buggy," said the Major, "and we will take my *coupé*."

As the two men descended the steps of the club the doctor's messenger boy came running toward them with a note.

"It came," he said, "to your office, brought by Miss Chalden's man. He said she said you were to get it at once wherever you were. I thought you would be here,

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for I heard you say you were going to meet Major Whyot, sir."

"Very good, Bob," said the doctor lightly, taking the letter. "Run back to the office and tell anyone who comes in that I will endeavor to return by, say, four o'clock, ready for duty. Come, Uncle."

As the two men got into the cab, Whyot, with an apology to the older man, opened the note. It was scribbled on a piece of Chalden's office paper in a hand the trembling characters of which suggested a heart breaking. Alicia had stopped in the outer office, at that time practically empty, most of the clerks being at luncheon, and had written her lover a hasty note. And thus it ran:

"What I wrote you last night was a lie. I did not know it. This morning I have learned the truth. I was not that baby that was left. My mother was an octo-roon, the child of a slave. She was not married to my father. Philip Chalden

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is he. *I am a black woman. This ends it all. I knew you would come, after the other letter, to plead with me. Now you must not. I could not bear to look at you across the gulf that separates us. And though I am a child of infamy, of shame, such as I never thought, yet I beg you to believe one thing. That is, I love you as if I were the purest, the noblest, the best of women. Oh, Will, Will, it is all summed up in this hideous confession, I am a black woman — beneath you. Forget me.*

"Alicia."

As they rattled down Chestnut Street, the Major, struck by the long silence, turned to look at his nephew. At first sight he thought the doctor had fainted.

"What's the matter? What has happened?"

He shook the younger man.

"Is she dead?"

"Would God she were! Read that!"

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"My God! My God!" whispered the Major, staring stupidly at the letter after he had mastered its contents.

Then he looked anxiously at his nephew, and the question, "What shall you do now?" died from his lips.

XVII

"**M**R. CHALDEN," cried William Penn Whyot, unceremoniously bursting into the room, brushing aside all pretence at announcement, leaving a startled clerk behind him, "read that and tell what it means!"

The Major, who followed the doctor, carefully closed the door. Chalden had not stirred from his position before the big desk since Alicia had left him two hours before. He surmised, especially when he saw the Major, that they had come to him about the Jackens story. He was not quite prepared, therefore, for Alicia's letter. He had been so shaken that morning, however, that the limit of endurance seemed to have been reached and further blows only fell harmlessly upon a dulled, indifferent consciousness. He stared at the letter a long time. Alicia had been prompt,

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she had not waited. How many traits she had that he possessed, that he gloried in! What qualities she was mistress of! What a woman she was, what she might have been — if — if — only —

"Well, sir," cried the doctor's voice, breaking in abruptly upon his thoughts.

It was so harsh, so strained, so unnatural, that the Major started in surprise.

"I have nothing to say," answered the financier dully, handing back the letter.

"Nothing to say!" cried the doctor. "That damned lie! You don't admit it? It isn't true?"

"It is the truth."

Whyot had approached nearer to Chalden. He stood close by his side, one hand upon the desk, looking down at the man. As he heard him admit the truth, he drew back his right hand and with the quickness of his old college days he struck the older man fair in the mouth. The blow cut Chalden's lip, and a thin stream of blood trickled down his gray beard.

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"William Penn!" cried the horrified Major, springing to his side and catching the arm of the young man as it was lifted to strike another blow.

"Let him alone," said Chalden, "no one can insult me now. I deserve it. Strike again for — Alicia's — sake."

His words came brokenly. He had been mistaken when he fancied that the limit of his endurance had been sounded. He had quivered under Alicia's contempt, but he responded again to Whyot's blow. A proud man and a strong had been Philip Chalden. When the proud and the strong break, the tragedy is appalling. The man was broken. But one thing remained to him. He knew no other, no better way.

"Listen," he said hopelessly. "I am rich. I do not know what my fortune is. Two hundred millions, anything I want to make it. I offered it all to Alicia. She threw it back in my face. Don't get insulted. You have done all you can already to break me. I offer it to you. The girl

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is beautiful. She is well educated; her principles are not mine. There is no trace perceptible of her mother's blood in her. She is a woman to be honored by the noblest and best. For God's sake, take her, and everything with her!"

There was a passion in his appeal, a touch of his old-time fire, and it was the motive that robbed the proposition of its mercenary, its degrading character. It was for Alicia, and for Alicia they could forgive him. And William Penn loved her, too, never as at that moment. The Major looked at his nephew, his heart in his mouth. What would his reply be?

"Could you bribe her?" questioned the doctor.

"No," said Chalden, "I could not."

That was his answer. He realized it.

"Where is she?" cried the younger man.

"I do not know."

"Is she at home?"

"I think not."

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"Where did she say she was going?"

"To her own people."

"And where may that be?"

Chalden shook his head. "I do not know."

"Who told her this awful story?"

"Olney."

"What!"

"Yes. An old black nurse of mine told him, and he betrayed it. Alicia forced him to tell it by pretending to know this other story. She says he is innocent."

"I can well believe it," cried Whyot; "I know the man. By heavens, that's where she's gone! He's in love with her. What can have happened?"

A fierce pang of jealousy, to which he had hitherto been a stranger, tore through Whyot's heart at the thoughts that came to him then. "Her own people." That meant Olney. She could not go to him except — just heaven!

"We must save her!" he cried, "from herself. Come, Uncle, and you," he added

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roughly, shaking Chalden by the shoulder. "You must come, too — to see the end of it."

Chalden rose to his feet mechanically, and, as he stood bewildered, the little Major in a sudden access of charity handed him his hat and overcoat.

"You are an infernal scoundrel," he whispered, as he helped the broken old man put on his overcoat, "but somehow or other I feel sorry for you. Come on."

The Major had not quite gone to seed, after all. He slipped his little arm inside his whilom enemy's huge one and piloted his faltering steps to the carriage. William Penn gave Olney's address to the driver.

XVIII

ALICIA left her father's private room with no very clearly defined purpose in her mind. It did not occur to her until she reached the outer office that she really had no place to go except her father's house. Her lover? No, he could never be anything to her again. And the thought of him reminded her of a duty. She sat down immediately and wrote him a trembling note which she despatched by a private messenger to his office. She was conscious of a dull pain in her final confession which only confirmed her previous renunciation, but she could not think of anything save the hideous fact that she was a negress. All her fine theories about equality vanished in the instant that she looked at them from the other — the under-side.

As she left the great office building she noticed the carriage standing before the

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door. She dismissed it without hesitation. She would have nothing, absolutely nothing, that had been given her by her father. The clothes she stood in, no more. Where should she go? There was but one place where, were the truth known, she would be welcome. She walked in a daze through the busy streets until she came to Olney's modest rectory.

"Yes, the clergyman was in," said the neat maid-servant who opened the door; "and he certainly would be glad to see Miss Chalden."

The woman, as did all her race, knew Alicia and what she had done for them.

"Would Miss Chalden go into the parlor and wait?"

But Alicia asked if Olney was in his study, and, on receiving an affirmative answer, said she would go there, and she would not trouble the maid to announce her. She brushed past the astonished girl, mounted the steps, opened the door, and entered the study.

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Olney was on his knees. There was a prayer-desk in one corner. His head was bowed and his arms were stretched straight before him. There was a stillness like death in the room when Alicia opened the door. The priest lifted his head and stared at the white face of the girl as if possessed.

"Alicia!" he cried. It was the first time he had addressed her thus, and he was not himself or he would have used more formal words.

"It is true," said the girl, "my father admitted it."

Her voice was low and level and monotonous, without passion. It was as if she had exhausted the variations of articulate speech with the anguish which had left her passive, and life for her now was expressed in that one hopeless minor key.

Olney raised himself to his feet and stepped nearer to her.

"My poor girl!" he murmured.

"I have broken with him. I have cast

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him off. There was no other place. I came here."

"Oh, my God, Alicia, you should not have done so! Couldn't you ——"

"I thought you loved me," said the girl.

"Alicia!"

"Don't you?" There was a note of subdued alarm in her voice. "How could you, the daughter of a liar, a scoundrel, a ——"

"Stop!" cried Olney. "My father, my mother. Were they not the same? Are not all people of mixed blood the children of shame upon shame? My God, sometimes I have cursed myself, not so much because of the helpless black blood, but for the fifteen-sixteenths of evil white!"

"Yes, yes," murmured the girl. "No doubt you are right from your standpoint. But to be white, any kind of white, and then wake up and find — and find ——"

"I know," said the man, "I know."

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He took her hand now.

"Alicia," he cried. "No, let me call you Miss Chalden. You are to me what you have always been. The best, the sweetest, the purest, the noblest of women. Even I can scarcely understand your position. To know in a moment what I have known for years — I can hardly master it. I can hardly realize the shock to you. I am used to it. I did not mind it so much until I met you. And now I want to do for you everything that I can. I want you to forget my personality and use me. It was through me that you became possessed of this dreadful secret."

"It would have become known in any event," said the girl, "sooner or later. This is my father's weakness. He did not realize that there was no power on earth to keep such a thing hidden."

"You are right. But I want to make reparation. I want to help you."

"I want no sacrifice," said the girl, looking at him, and he noticed how fierce was

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the gleam of her eyes in spite of her dull face, her low voice, and listless manner.

"Will you swear as you hope for heaven, if there is such a place, before God, if there is a God, to tell me the truth?"

"I will."

"Do you love me?"

"I do, with all my soul."

"After what you know?"

"More than ever. Why should that make any difference to me? It only puts us on a level."

Alicia winced at this in spite of herself, but she answered bravely:

"I do not love you; I can never love again. I never loved anyone but Dr. Whyot, and now him least of all. I shall never see him again."

"Does he know?"

"Yes, I wrote him. But I respect you. I used to pity you. Now I know something of what you feel. If you will take me, if you will marry me, I — I — we will work together for our — our —" she bit

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her lip, but she would finish the sentence, "our people."

Heaven opened before the vision of that man as he heard these words. But because he was a gentleman, a priest, because his love for her was sublimer than an earthly passion, he stopped her.

"Think, Alicia. You propose an irrevocable step. You are cutting yourself off from the last possibility of return. Once married to me the whole world will know that you are not white. There must be no pretence ——"

"Nor would I wish any," interrupted the girl, "else I had not been here. Come, we are made for each other. We are alike, we are alone. I have no one but you ——"

"Never stoop to plead with me," cried the man passionately. "To marry you is the ambition, the desire of my heart. I only hesitated for your sake. You have decided, so be it. We will face the world — together."

"I am glad," answered Alicia simply.

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"And have you thought, when ——"

"Let it be at once," said the girl; "you know I have nothing. These," she continued, lifting her purse and laying it on the desk, stripping her fingers of their rings, taking her watch from her dress and placing them beside it, "these must be returned to my father. I wish nothing of him, nothing. This, too," she added, drawing a last sparkling diamond from her other hand, "this must go to Dr. Whyot. You will see that they are delivered?"

"I will. Alicia," he cried, gazing at the pretty baubles, a new thought coming to him, "you shall want for nothing. I am not poor. I will give you all. I can work."

"I only seek a refuge, and rest," said the girl wearily. "Let us go."

"Are you ready?"

"Now as at any time."

Olney called a cab, and they drove to the City Hall, procured a license, went to

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one of the man's clerical friends, explained the situation briefly, and then Alicia Avery and Henry Olney were made man and wife. She had scarcely spoken one word from the time they left the house. She had been as one dumb. The bride had all her bridal whiteness in her face as they drove back to the rectory. He had gained the desire of his heart, but the manner of gaining lacked all that he had wished for. He was all tenderness and consideration for her — yet he was her husband. There was no essential racial difference between them. Olney had not ventured upon any caress. In the little study once more he bent down to kiss her. To Alicia's eyes the lips that approached her cheek, though as finely cut as her own, suddenly took on the semblance of the coarse, thick lips of the negro. The blackness of the man, unseen, smote her. With a low cry the girl shrank back.

"Don't!" she whispered. "Not now. Wait."

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Then she put her face in her hands and writhed and trembled without a sound. Olney understood, and his heart sickened within him. There was a difference after all! What was the present situation? He had thought to save her, had he made it worse? His heart turned to stone as he looked at her quivering before him. Was the old prejudice still there and had Alicia not realized it after all?

"Miss Chalden, Alicia, I mean," he said, quietly, with the old self-repression, "Alicia, don't! I understand. I won't touch you."

"Leave me alone for a little while. You understand. This is so sudden and strange to me. I will be brave. I didn't realize ——"

She looked at him piteously, so piteously, that he half forgot the pain of her avoidance.

"It shall be as you wish," he said gently. "I shall leave you here until — until you send for me."

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"Thank you," said the girl gratefully, looking at him, "you were always a gentleman."

He took comfort from that. There was nothing that she could have said to him that could have satisfied him so completely, unless it were that which he feared she could never say:

"I love you."

XIX

L EFT alone in the room Alicia sank down in the arm-chair in front of his desk, in Olney's chair! She had seen him sit there on the rare occasions when, in company with others, she had visited the study on the business of the mission. In Olney's place! Yes, by every right of ancestry and birth, she was in Olney's place. And she was his wife! For the first time since she had heard the news that morning Alicia was alone. She could sit down quietly and think it out undisturbed.

She had fathomed the terrible situation to its very depths. She had exhausted anguish and despair for the present, and she could now almost consider her situation dispassionately, as if she had been a stranger looking at a terrible drama. The shock of it all had deadened and dulled her sensibilities. Now she seemed to feel

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no pain. She could exert her powers of analysis in a curious, impersonal way, and she wondered at what result she had arrived.

She had acted promptly, decisively, upon the information she had received. She had spurned her father. She had abandoned her lover. She had married Olney. There had been nothing else to do. The proposition had sprung into her mind that he and she, outcasts, social pariahs, as they were, could work together, hand in hand, for the people to which they belonged. She had told her lover she could not marry a black man, yet she had done so. She had given the last proof of her convictions, but not until, and only because, she too had become a negro. What next?

She was Olney's wife. She, Alicia Chalden, was the wife of a negro! That one fact beat into her brain, only that, the wife of a negro! She told herself that she, too, was as he. That they were just the same, and yet in honesty to herself she was forced

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to admit that in this last analysis it was not so. It was true they had the same percentage of black blood in them, but Olney had lived his life in the full consciousness of the fact, which he had known from the very beginning. He had realized always, under all circumstances, that he was a negro. She had lived her life without the slightest knowledge of it. With not even the faintest suspicion of it.

She had looked at life from the standpoint of the master race. She was a white woman, with all her race's hopes, dreams, thoughts, aspirations, with the white woman's natural affiliation with the white man, with the white woman's inherent antagonism for the black man.

Heredity? It was nothing. Environment? It was everything. Starting from the same ground it had made her white, him black. She could not in a moment unlearn the lessons of a lifetime. Her theories of equality failed utterly when she had to make a personal application of

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them. Conscious of all she had gone through, she could not escape from a feeling of superiority, social and racial, overpowering in its magnitude, to the man she had married.

At least there were shreds and tatters of the feeling left, and it was fearfully strong in her, it overwhelmed her. The late environment clung to her, it made her position unsupportable. She was married to this man. She was his wife. How damnable was the iteration of that constantly recurrent thought! Until death did them part, and no one could put them asunder, since God had joined them. Ah, had He? Was this His work? And her husband had not kissed her, but only because he willed not to do so. He had the right. She was his. She belonged to him. The white woman to the negro! If she had known of it always it would have been different, but she had not known. Her character had been formed on white lines, his black. The situation was impossible.

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There must be an escape. She must go away.

But where could she go? She thought of her father with contempt. She thought of the race to which she was inexorably condemned with a fierce loathing, a more intense repulsion; in that repulsion she included, in spite of herself, her husband. Yes, he was a gentleman; but, just heaven, he was a negro! She — she — was a white woman. The years of her life had implanted the consciousness of that, and the consciousness remained in the face of her recent knowledge. What could she do?

Alicia's mental and moral faculties were reeling on their throne. She felt unable to discriminate in her dull confusion between right and wrong. Were they only words, words, after all? How could she, a child of crime, of sin, of infamy, of iniquity, for Satan knew how many generations back, be held accountable for what she did? She was not a free moral agent. Some malign

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fate against which it was useless to battle had brought about this state of affairs. She was damned, whether in life or death — what mattered it?

Alicia was mad, at last. That throne had been vacated. The poor soul was empty — swept and garnished! Of one thing only was she conscious, upon one thing only was she determined. She would never, never, in heaven, or earth, or hell, be his wife! But how escape?

On the desk by her side lay an ancient Spanish dagger of marvellous workmanship. Olney used it for a paper-knife. Some travelled friend had brought it to him. She took it up in her hand, unsheathed it. Her eyes scanned the polished blade. It quivered in her trembling fingers. The steel in the sunlight wavered before her vision like a white flame.

There were voices in the hall below, steps on the stair. Now or never. Alicia lifted her arm.

“Will!” she whispered, and then, open-

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eyed, implacable, urged thereto by remorseless fate, she drove home the lethal weapon with all the force left in her.

"Thank God!" she cried, in exaltation, as she delivered the blow, returning—heaven be praised—in that fleeting instant of exquisite physical pain, to the belief of her lifetime, the confidence of a certain faith, and in the Article of Death calling upon His Name. She swayed a moment or two. The red blood spurted about the dagger hilt. It was the same poor human blood that fills the veins of every child of God. Her resolution kept her erect for the moment. She swiftly remembered she had a prayer to make before she went; she made it in one breaking word:

"Mercy!"

That was all. Who shall say that she did not receive it?

The door was thrown open. Thrusting aside Olney, who had shown the way, Doctor Whyot burst into the room. The old

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supremacy of the white race, thought the priest bitterly — yet he gave way. Hard after the two came the Major, and last of all Alicia's father. In bitterness of heart he had planned his assault upon society, he had thirsted for his revenge, and in bitterness of heart he saw it there, at his feet.

"She has fainted," cried Doctor Whyot, kneeling down and turning her over.

He recoiled with horror at what he saw.

"Dead! Good God! Alicia!" he said, taking her in his arms.

And again Olney, with a stopped heart, gave way. Not even in death was she to be his. He realized the situation before the others, he loved the most.

No one spoke. They were appalled, bound, stricken. At her lover's touch Alicia opened her eyes. Her glance swept them all, the Major at her side indifferently; her father, was it in forgiveness? her husband, was it in pity? and Doctor Whyot — ay, surely, there was love! But she said nothing. She was past all speech,

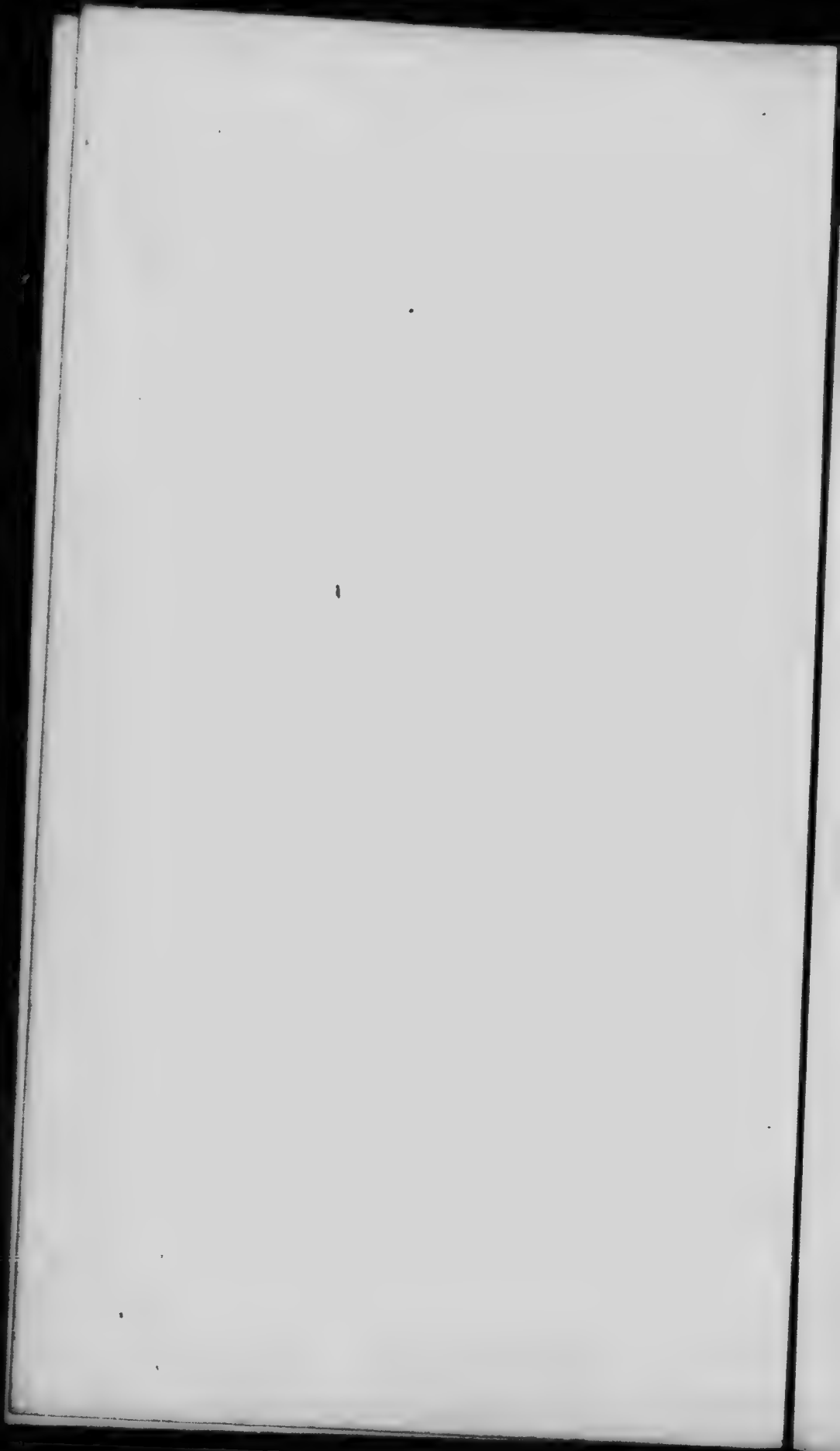
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all suffering now. She only closed her eyes — forever. They had come too late. It was over.

There at their feet was the poor little Doctor of Philosophy.

Society was there, with its master, Money, and its servant, Science, and its protagonist, Love: the rules and regulations, the artificial conventionalities, the wisdom and the folly of the one; the power for good or evil of the other; the knowledge and certitude, the calm impassivity of the third; the passionate self-sacrifice of the greatest and last — they were all there. Collectively or singly, they were alike helpless. They could do nothing, nothing, in the face of such a problem. Alicia herself had found the only solution.

And at their feet she lay, a mute, eternal protest.



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